Byzantine Philosophy

A SYSTEMATIC PERSPECTIVE

GEORGI KAPRIEV

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Preface

The book aims to recapitulate three decades of my research work. The intention of this volume is to present Byzantine philosophy in systematic form. Its primary claim is to present my personal viewpoint of Byzantine philosophy in a comprehensive way.

Over the course of time I have attempted to describe philosophical developments in the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium) in chronological order.[1] During the 1990s I intended to complete various studies of authors and concepts rooted in Byzantine philosophical culture and integrate them in a single overarching volume. That plan failed. In 1999, I was invited by Stephen F. Brown and Kent Emery Jr. to present Byzantine philosophy in an edited volume of around 60,000 words. That book has still not been published. In spite of that, I will take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my esteemed colleagues for including me in that project. The research conducted for it served as the basis for the emergence of a preliminary Bulgarian version of a monograph in 2001,[2] which found an opportunity for development in the book *Philosophie in Byzanz*. Now, it seems to me, the time is ripe for a return to the original plan, but from a different perspective.

It was first announced alongside the restructuring of my university course Byzantine Philosophy, which I have been offering continuously at St. Kliment Ohridski University in Sofia since 1999 (60 academic hours of lectures and 60 hours of seminars). If reference books are to be believed, it was the first course on this subject permanently included in an academic curriculum. Until 2005, it was arranged chronologically, but then I restructured it in a systematic format. It has also been offered in various forms at the universities of Cologne, Hamburg, Karlsruhe and Plovdiv. This book follows the subject plan and logic of the course, which consequently determines its title. It is also, of course, a condensed summary of my previous publications. I consider it appropriate to indicate the texts in which the ideas presented were first developed, accepting the risk that this will unbalance the bibliography.

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1 In *Philosophie in Byzanz* (Würzburg 2005), as well as in the part I edited, "Die Philosophie im Byzantinischen Reich" in the volume *Byzanz. Judentum* (Basel 2019) of the *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*. This part was written by T. Boiadjiev, J. Demetracopoulos, K. Ierodiakonou and myself.

2 *Византийската философия. Четири центъра на синтеза* [Byzantine Philosophy. Four Centres of Synthesis], Sofia, LIK 2001. A much expanded second edition appeared in 2011 from East-West Publishing House.

In terms of content, the book might be titled *Context and Main Topics of Byzantine Philosophy*. Initially acquiring an understanding of the context in which this philosophy unfolds is necessary in order to recognize and identify model instances among the individual cases that will inevitably be discussed. Equally important is the interpretation of this context in terms of points of congruence and difference in a comparison between the cultures of the Christian East and the Christian West. This mostly revolves around nuanced differences and similarities, but these almost never reveal a complete identity. Knowing the proper context helps to avoid superficial analogies, the introduction of anachronistic or ideological figures and the objectification of abstractions.

Familiarity with the intellectual context also enables the selection of philosophical subject areas that can be identified as the main topics of Byzantine philosophy. I would further explain that we cannot really speak of any "essentiality" or "substantiality" of philosophy in Byzantium, nor of philosophy in general. Among the numerous philosophical projects in Byzantium, I will take a closer look at one specific trend of philosophical thought that, in my view, embodies the peculiarity and uniqueness of Byzantine philosophizing in the most concentrated form. However, this strand is not uniform, and it can hardly be characterized as a school. A detailed knowledge of the thought context allows the selection of themes that genuinely underlie this philosophical tendency, proving relevant or influential in various forms for other philosophical approaches in Byzantium.

At the end of this preface, I feel compelled to express my deep gratitude to the people and institutions that have enabled and supported my work over these decades. I would like to thank the Thomas Institute of the University of Cologne, the IK Morphomata, as well as the foundations Alexander von Humboldt, DAAD, KAAD, and Andrew Mellon, which made my research in Germany and France possible. My thanks also go to the publisher for their commitment in publishing this book. My special thanks go to Tom Phillips for proofreading the text. But above all, I want to honor the many 'brothers in arms' in Bulgaria and around the world, my brothers and sisters in spirit, comrades and opponents, with whom I have walked this long road together. This book is my tribute to them.

Georgi Kapriev
November 10, 2024

PART 1

Context

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1 Byzantium and the Byzantine Commonwealth

Byzantium does not have a clearly defined starting point; it never 'emerged' in the common sense meaning of the term.[1] It lacks prehistory or early history in the sense that these concepts are used in relation to the Western Middle Ages.[2] In contrast to the medieval West, τὸ κράτος τῶν Ῥωμαίων does not owe its existence to a rupture or breakdown, but represents a continuation of the ancient Roman state, albeit with a Christian worldview at its structural core. Since the 18th century, Byzantium (the old name of the capital—Βυζάντιον) has been used to refer to the Eastern Roman Empire, finally destroyed between 1453 and 1475 by the Ottomans.

Indeed, cultural history and the history of philosophy should not depend so much on the formation and development of this state. The scope of Byzantine culture does not coincide with the historically fluctuating borders or the state nor even with the temporal frame of Byzantium. One usually speaks of Byzantinism[3] or of the Byzantine commonwealth.[4] This refers to the cultural tradition fundamentally influenced by Byzantine culture, without necessarily including the territories in which it unfolds within the state-forming borders of Byzantium. This tradition is associated with a paradigm that asserted itself through multiple synchronous variations of a complicated cultural process. In all cases, this cultural system remained dependent in principle on Constantinople and the other major cultural centers of the Empire.

2 The Emergence of Byzantine Philosophy

The emergence of Byzantine philosophy cannot be explained by any kind of catastrophism because there was no definitive historical break between Byzantine philosophical culture and the philosophy of Hellenic antiquity. The transfer of the entire corpus of ancient philosophical heritage to the cultural legacy of Greek-speaking Christian philosophy was a structural feature of Byzantine philosophical culture. Commentary on and study of the philosophical works of

1 P. Schreiner, *Byzanz*, München ²1994, 1.

2 Cf. H.-G. Beck, *Das byzantinische Jahrtausend*, München 1994, 11.

3 This does not mean "treachery", "trickery", "cunning", but the Byzantine-influenced system of culture and thought—cf. Г.В. Флоровский, *Восточные отцы v–viii веков*, Paris 1933 (репринт: Москва 1992), 5 [Florovsky, G.W., Byzantine Fathers of the 5th–8th Centuries, Paris 1933 (reprint Moscow 1992), 5].

4 Cf. D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe 500–1453*, London 1971.

the ancient Hellenes, Plato and Aristotle in particular, constituted an integral part of traditional Byzantine education.[5] Fundamentally, the Byzantine educational system retained the structure inherited from antiquity. However, it is important to note that this preservation was not complete. For instance, two new disciplines, law and philosophy (which had already become an independent discipline), were added to the classical curriculum of the Advanced School of Constantinople (founded in 425). Nevertheless, after 617, when Stephanus of Alexandria relocated to the capital to teach Plato and Aristotle, there was an unbroken tradition of teaching Hellenic philosophy.[6]

Given this fact, any attempt to answer the question of the origins of Byzantine culture should necessarily be preceded by a methodological supposition regarding ways of conceptualizing the beginning of a specific cultural era (in spite of the conditionality of the term "cultural era" in general[7]). The conception of such a beginning could be associated with the time when the first features of its structure become discernible; or when these features begin to compete successfully with existing structures; or when the emerging structure proves to be the dominant (though not the sole) formation at the time; or when it becomes the only legitimate cultural form. The last three options have been implemented in the literature.

2.1 *The Fourth Century*

As a proposed starting point for Byzantine philosophy, the fourth century marks a significant boundary. Although one cannot speak of the emergence of Byzantium as a state in a legal sense, the founding of Constantinople (324) and its consecration as the capital of the empire (330) nevertheless play a decisive role. This period also witnesses the so-called division of the empire under Emperor Theodosius (395 AD). Even more significant are the two ecumenical councils (Nicaea in 325 and Constantinople in 381) and the intensive intellectual activity associated with them. This activity lays the foundations of true Byzantine culture. During this time, however, processes of fermentation were still too intense, and there was not yet a definitive cultural form. The emerging cultural structure was dynamically shaped in diverse directions. Therefore, the period between the 4th and 6th centuries is defined as early Byzantine, but also as pre-Byzantine.[8]

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5 Cf. H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, Band 1, München 1978, 3.

6 *Byzanz. Das Reich und die Stadt*, ed. A. Ducellier, Frankfurt am Main–New York 1990, 64 f.

7 Cf. A. Speer, *1000 Jahre Philosophie: Ein anderer Blick auf die Philosophie des „Mittelalters"*, Paderborn 2023, 4–9.

8 P. Schreiner, *Byzanz*, München ^{2}1994, 4 and 7–12.

2.2 *The Sixth-Seventh Century*

There are good reasons for considering the period defined by the reigns of Justinian (527–565) and Heraclius (610–641) as marking the beginning of Byzantine philosophy. Justinian aimed at the final establishment of the integral Christian state, in which ancient imperial dignity was to be restored, but on a Christian foundation. His ideal was the "*symphonia*" of ecclesiastical and political hierarchies as the basis for a Christian culture and Christian way of life.[9] These processes were intensified by events during the time of Heraclius and the years following,[10] which sealed the fate of an empire that once encircled the Mediterranean as an internal lake. One result of this reduction was the real presence and coexistence of two culture-shaping patriarchates: the old Rome and the new Rome, Constantinople. The tension between the two centers was made manifest, for example, through the involvement of Pope Martin I. Meanwhile, Latin had also been replaced by Greek as the administrative language of the empire. Maximus the Confessor and his contemporaries are regarded as the first true Byzantine philosophers.

2.3 *The Ninth Century*

Beyond various cultural-political ideologizations and geopolitical analogies, two interpretations regarding the beginning of Byzantine philosophy in the 9th century are worthy of comment. The earlier position is that of Gerhard Podskalsky. He writes: "If, according to specialized literature, the patristic era as a whole concludes with John of Damascus, then with equal right Patriarch Photius can be designated as the initiator of medieval philosophical theology." The same should apply to philosophy. Podskalsky delineates the boundary between "Patristics" and the "Byzantine period" as the time interval between Damascene and Photius.[11] Linos Benakis' argument takes a different charac-

9 J. Meyendorff, *L'Église orthodoxe*, Paris 1995, 25; Г.В. Флоровский, *Восточные отцы v–viii веков*, Москва 1992, 29 [Florovsky, G.W., *Byzantine Fathers of the 5th–8th Centuries*, Paris 1933 (reprint Moscow 1992)], М. Хронц, 'Света София' в Константинопол и императорската литургия, in: *Archiv für mittelalterliche Philosophie und Kultur*, 5 (1998) [M. Chronz, ‚Hagia Sophia' in Constantinople and the Imperial Liturgy—Bulgarian], 42–76.

10 By 642, the empire had lost Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. In 698, Carthage was also lost. The empire had already been reduced exclusively to the territories of the northern Mediterranean coast and Asia Minor, whereby Asia Minor was partially conquered by the Turks after 1071 and finally in the 14th century.

11 G. Podskalsky, *Theologie und Philosophie in Byzanz. Der Streit um die theologische Methodik in der spätbyzantinischen Geistesgeschichte (14./15. Jh.), seine systematischen Grundlagen und seine historische Entwicklung*, München 1977, 107.

ter. His thesis states that while the ancient Christian authors of ascetic life theory appropriated the concept of "philosophy," the earliest manifestations of autonomous philosophical thought in Byzantium become visible in the 9th and 10th centuries with the emergence of a so-called Christian humanism.[12] The science of knowing all things foundational to humanity and the world was preserved throughout the Byzantine era (9th–15th centuries), Benakis asserts. In the 9th century, philosophy becomes autonomous from theology and gains institutional independence. Following this, there was no integration of philosophy and theology in Byzantium as in the West.[13] These two positions raise questions whose answers that make it possible to delineate the true context of Byzantine philosophy.

3 The Patristics

The historical-theological concept of "patristic," as well as the term "patrology," emerged in the 17th century in the West. The former refers to the historical epoch of the early church, which is believed to have lasted from the 2nd century to the beginning of medieval church history.[14] In Western culture, the first major period of the history of Christian theological and philosophical thought is defined as patristic. It encompasses authors from Tertullian to Gregory the Great, with others such as Isidore of Seville, Boniface, or Bede the Venerable also mentioned towards the end of the list. It is followed by periods of prescholasticism, early, high, and late scholasticism, which are further extended by the theology of modern times, itself divided into periods.[15] Greek authors from Justin Martyr to John of Damascus are also considered to be patristic authors.

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12 L. Benakis, Byzantine Philosophy, in: L. Benakis, *Byzantine Philosophy. An Introductory Approach*, Saarbrücken 2017, 10 (first publication in: *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 2, London–New York 1998, 160–165).

13 L. Benakis, Die theoretische und praktische Autonomie der Philosophie als Fachdisziplin in Byzanz, in: L. Benakis, *Text and Studies on Byzantine Philosophy*, Athens 2002, 98 (first publication in: *Knowledge and the Sciences in Medieval Philosophy. Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Medieval Philosophy, v. 1*, ed. M. Asztalos, Helsinki 1990, 223–227).

14 Cf. И. Цоневски, *Патрология*, София 1986 [I. Tsonevski, *Patrology*, Sofia 1986—Bulgarian], 7; E. Mühlenberg, Patristik, in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, B. 26, Berlin–New York 1996, 97–106; H.R. Drobnen, Patristik, in: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, Freiburg in Br.–Basel–Rom–Wien 1998, 1475–1477; K.S. Frank, Patristik, *in: Lexikon des Mittelalters*, Bd. 6, Stuttgart–Weimar 1999, 1793–1796.

15 M. Grabmann, *Die Geschichte der katholischen Theologie*, Freiburg im Br. ^{2}1961, *passim*.

The assertions of the fathers, it is noted, had the character of "auctoritates" or "dicta authentica" for medieval theologians.[16] Already in the late Middle Ages, four criteria for belonging to the Church Fathers were formulated in the Latin Church: *doctrina orthodoxa, sanctitas vitae, approbatio ecclesiae, antiquitas*. Later in the same period, the term "teacher of the church" was coined. In this case the fourth criterion is replaced by *eminens doctrina*. Unlike the previous case, therefore, the concept is not limited to antiquity.[17]

The divisional schema between "Greek patristics" and "Byzantine church writers" was also transferred to studies of the Byzantine intellectual and philosophical tradition. Even Karl Krumbacher (or more precisely Albert Ehrhard in the second edition of Krumbacher's *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur*) declares the "Greek intellect" to be sterile in the period after John of Damascus.[18] The schema is explicitly encountered in Hans-Georg Beck's seminal work.[19] Even Basilios Tatakis, who in his pioneering work *La philosophie byzantine* of 1949 dates the beginnings of Byzantine philosophy to the 4th century, speaks in a later text of a preceding "pre-Byzantine" period, termed "patristic" and distinct from the "Byzantine period".[20] As has been seen, the same can be encountered in Podskalsky and Benakis. Thus, an unfamiliar periodization is introduced, alien to the Eastern Christian tradition.

"Patristic" or ἡ πατερικὴ θεολογία, a term associated solely with theology, has never been a designation for a specific time interval. It is true that the period of the seven Ecumenical Councils has always been regarded as normative, and the theses of the church fathers from that period understood as criteria and correctives for theological discourse. In Orthodoxy, however, and unlike Western understanding, the sequence of church fathers extends continuously throughout the history of the church. In all epochs there have been, there are and there will be people who can be identified as Fathers of the Church.[21] Πατερικὴ θεολογία is not a designation for a single historical period but a concept encompassing the experience of Christian fathers of all periods. The Synodal Tomos of 1368, for example, by which Gregory Palamas was canonized, declares

16 Ibid., 19.

17 H.R. Drobnen, *Lehrbuch der Patrologie*, Frankfurt am Main ^{3}2011, 60.

18 K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur von Justinian bis zum Ende des Oströmischen Reiches (527–1453)*, München ^{2}1897, 428.

19 H.-G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur in Byzanz*, München 1959, 279 sq.

20 B. Tatakis, La philosophie grecque patristique et byzantine, in: *Histoire de la philosophie I: Orient, Antiquité, Moyen Age*, ed. B. Parain, Paris 1969, 936–1005.

21 *И.* Цоневски, *Патрология*, София 1986 [I. Tsonevski, *Patrology*, Sofia 1986—Bulgarian], 12.

him a Ἐκκλησίας διδάσκαλος and classifies him among the "God-bearing fathers and teachers".[22] Patristics and Byzantine theology should not be understood as sequentially occurring phenomena. They are not divided by temporal hiatuses. They are realities of different orders, belonging to different classifications. They are concepts developed according to non-coincident criteria that do not allow them to be fitted into schemes of the same order.[23]

A relevant periodization of philosophy in Byzantium requires an understanding of several specific phenomena of Byzantine culture that do not entirely coincide with phenomena in Western culture, even though they bear the same names.

4 Theology

Attempts to ascribe the concept of theology from Western scholasticism and the corresponding model of the relationship between theology and philosophy as being inherently valid to Byzantine culture are the main source of unsuccessful interpretations that endure in our research field. The verdict of Karl Krumbacher and Albert Ehrhard respectively that Byzantium was not familiar with "original and real fruitful activity in the philosophical field,"[24] has its supporters.[25] Even now, the scheme of Hans-Georg Beck,[26] unreservedly working with the Latin definition of theology, is praised as scientifically exemplary.[27] According to Beck, Byzantine philosophical texts should be placed under the heading "Dogmatics and Polemics" and treated as "theological literature." The undeniable merit of Gerhard Podskalsky[28] is that he raises questions about the

22 Tomo sinodale del 1368, in: *Gregorio Palama et oltre*, ed. A. Rigo, Firenze 2004, 127, 782–785.

23 Cf. G. Kapriev, *Philosophie in Byzanz*, Würzburg 2005, 14–15; G. Kapriev, *Lateinische Rivalen in Konstantinopel: Anselm von Havelberg und Hugo Eterianus*, Leuven 2018, 242–246.

24 K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur von Justinian bis zum Ende des Oströmischen Reiches (527–1453)*, 2 Aufl., München 1897, 428.

25 As well as its continuation in the early Herbert Hunger: "It can be argued whether there was a Byzantine philosophy at all! In the metaphysical area, theology was responsible once and for all, and what was produced outside this framework at philosophical works, as far as we see to this day, hardly goes substantially beyond a derived Platonism and Aristotelism. Let alone that one could speak of a development of Byzantine philosophy"—H. Hunger, *Byzantinische Geisteswelt. Von Konstantin dem Großen bis zum Fall Konstantinopels*, Baden-Baden 1958, 15.

26 H.-G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich*, München1959.

27 Cf. e.g. P. Schreiner, Georgi Kapriev. Philosophie in Byzanz, in: *Historische Zeitschrift*, 282 (2006), 465.

28 G. Podskalsky, *Theologie und Philosophie in Byzanz: Der Streit um die theologische Methodik*

specific concept of "theology" and its scope within Byzantine culture. His viewpoint prompts the focus to be directed, not on the themes, but on the methods used by the respective author of each specific work, which should then be viewed as a criterion for categorizing the respective text.

4.1 *Theology as Mystical Experience*

In the Greek-speaking Christian context, theology as such is not a sovereign activity of the human mind. It is not a rational deduction of revealed presuppositions, but the self-expression of God, giving man an experience of himself. Theology is the word of God in the sense of *genitivus subiectivus*.[29] Theology is the direct self-expression of the transcendent and absolutely inaccessible Trinity. Therefore, "theology" is also called the contemplation of the Divinity in its glory. This mystical experience, interpreted as participation in the divine Spirit, is in no way accessible to human abilities and remains inexpressible. Its recognition is granted to humanity as theological grace (θεολογική χάρις). Through this grace the blessed one participates in divine life. The Cristian theologian is no longer a thinker reflecting on the divine, but rather one who recognizes the very words of God, which God graciously grants him through super-intellectual enlightenment. These "words" cannot be articulated discursively.

Theology was never taught in Byzantium as a school discipline. Even the schools located within monastery grounds were not "spiritual" schools: "There were no schools in Byzantium that were exclusively meant for theologians and clerics."[30] The academy at the Patriarchate of Constantinople trained senior Church officials as well as experts in canon law, but not scientifically trained theologians.[31] Theological education, or formation, was acquired in the monasteries. Theology was seen as the pinnacle of spiritual exercise *par excellence*. This tradition, established in earliest monastic instruction, began with the prescriptions of Pachomius, was explicitly adopted and expanded by Basil the Great and John Cassian, and gained normative status in the *Ladder of Divine Ascent* of John Climacus, the "handbook" of both Symeon the New Theologian

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in der spätbyzantinischen Geistesgeschichte (14.–15. Jh.), seine systematischen Grundlagen und seine historische Entwicklung, München 1977.

29 Philipp W. Rosemann summarizes my thesis in this appropriate manner in his review of the book *Philosophy in Byzantium—Tijdschrift voor filosofie*, 1 (2006), 171.

30 L. Benakis, Die theoretische und praktische Autonomie der Philosophie als Fachdisziplin in Byzanz, in: L.G. Benakis, *Texts and Studies on Byzantine Philosophy*, Athens 2002, 99.

31 Cf. R. Browning, The Patriarchal School at Constantinople in the Twelfth Century, in: *Byzantion* 32 (1962), 167–202; 33 (1963), 11–40.

and Gregory of Sinai. The ultimate goal formulated there is participation in the mysteries of God and the indwelling of the divine light, identified with life in the wisdom of God.[32] One who achieves this is designated a theologian.

4.1.1 The Experience Philosopher

The representatives of mystical spirituality insist that only they lead a truly philosophical life (ἐμφιλοσόφος ζωή).[33] Alongside "practical philosophy," which entails the exercise of virtues and dispassion, it claims to encompass the true understanding of God and infallible knowledge of beings, thereby ensuring perfect orthodoxy regarding the dogmas.[34] Knowledge of truth is understood as the acceptance of spiritual gifts. All other aspects related to knowledge are considered mental phenomena and mere empirical evidence,[35] which are obviously evaluated as secondary. The key message is that the perfect philosopher is the one whose mind (νοῦς) is formed through the practice of ethical, natural and theological philosophy.[36] What is emphasized, however, is that if he unites his senses and mental faculties through the Spirit (πνεῦμα), then he knows divine and human things directly and truly, as they are by nature, sees their principles (λόγοι), and contemplates as clearly as possible the one cause of everything, the Trinity.[37] The true philosopher possesses in himself the supranatural union with God cognitively (γνωστῶς) in a direct and straightforward way.[38]

This position is outlined in the writings of Symeon the New Theologian and Nicetas Stethatos. The spiritually enlightened mind (νοῦς) knows beings as God knew them before creation according to their nature and essence.[39] The theologian who abides in constant *hesychia* receives the divine radiance of grace and proclaims divine words.[40] One who receives the grace of God proclaims it and articulates the God-given dogmas. Christ himself imparts to him the words of

32 Cf. e.g. Simeon Novus Theologus, Hymni, 33, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Hymnes 16–40*, ed. J. Koder (Sources chrétiennes 174), Paris 1971, 418, 74–75.

33 Cf. e.g. Nicetas Pectoratus, Capita physica. Centuria secunda, 85, in: PG 120, 941C.

34 Cf. Gregorius Sinaites, Capita valde utilia per acrostichidem disposita, 136, in: PG 150, 1297D–1300A.

35 Ibid., 3, in: PG 150, 1240AB.

36 Ibid., 127, in: PG 150, 1292A.

37 Ibid., 98, in: PG 150, 1272B.

38 Ibid., 127, in: PG 150, 1292D.

39 Cf. Nicetas Pectoratus, Capita gnostica. Centura tertia, 8–12, in: PG 120, 957A–960C.

40 Simeon Novus Theologus, Hymni, 43, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Hymnes 41–58*, ed. J. Koder (Sources chrétiennes 196), Paris 1973, 56, 11–58, 21.

wisdom, the words of knowledge, and divine understanding, even though the recipient himself is linguistically inept and not versed in external learning.[41]

4.1.2 Theological Training and the Spiritual Father

The paths to acquiring the theological state are evolving spiritual exercises and preparations. By entering the "school" (σχολή), meaning monastic practice, one aims to acquire wisdom, education and benefit (σοφία, παιδεία, ὠφέλεια).[42] The emphasis falls on somatic and psychological asceticism. The decisive condition for its possibility is obedience. It is a complete denial of one's own soul, achieved through physical activity. Obedience is the grave of one's own will and the resurrection of humility. The obedient one is like the dead: he does not object or reflect.[43] The tranquility (ἡσυχία) of the body achieved is knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) and the proper ordering of mores and senses. The *hesychia* of the soul is knowledge of the fundamentals of reason (λογισμοί) and uncorrupted thought.[44] By attaining ultimate silence and ignorance, the practitioner becomes a son of philosophy (φιλοσοφίας υἱός).[45] In him the fire of the noetic light becomes inherent and illumines him. The enraptured person is by nature human and by grace divine. This is the grace of unity, which is sensitive, intellectual, essential, and spiritual.[46]

Guiding one to this state is the work of the spiritual father. There are, as Nicetas Stethatos explains, three stages of ascent to perfection: a purifying, an enlightening and a mystical one (καθαρτική, φωτιστική, μυστική). The sage becomes a theologian who can enlighten people through theological teachings only at the final mystical level.[47] Those who do not have a teacher (διδάσκαλος) and guide (ὁδηγός) but have decided to follow their own reason are completely lost.[48] The pupil, or the obedient one (ὑπήκοος), must look to his or her elder as a living example. He must appreciate everything that comes from him as a rule and a law.[49] The words and teachings of the teacher must be accepted by

41 Simeon Novus Theologus, Hymni, 34, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Hymnes 16–40*, ed. J. Koder (Sources chrétiennes 174), Paris 1971, 434, 84–90.

42 Johannes Climacus, Scala paradisi, 4, in: PG 88, 724C.

43 Johannes Climacus, Scala paradisi, 4, in: PG 88, 680A.

44 Ibid., 27, in: PG 88, 1097A.

45 Ibid., 4, in: PG 88, 712D.

46 Simeon Novus Theologus, Hymni, 30, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Hymnes 16–40*, ed. J. Koder (Sources chrétiennes 174), Paris 1971, 346, 80–86; 350, 143–352; 372, 457–462.

47 Nicetas Pectoratus, Capita gnostica. Centura tertia, 41; 43–44, in: PG 120, 972C; 973B–976B.

48 Nicetas Pectoratus, Capita physica. Centuria secunda, 10, in: PG 120, 906A.

49 Johannes Climacus, Liber ad pastorem, 5, in: PG 88, 1177B.

the disciple as divine words.[50] In the person of the spiritual teacher, the disciple sees Christ himself and enters into a dialogue with Christ.[51] The spiritual teaching ministry is based on the principle that Divine grace acts on disciples through the teacher.[52] The disciple-teacher relationship is a complete existential connection that shapes the existence of both the disciple and the teacher over the course of a lifetime. This co-existence is mostly not about education, but about existential formation, which continues until the death of the teacher and even thereafter.[53]

4.1.3 The Status of the Sciences and the Arts

Gerhard Podskaslky remarks with regard to Byzantine monasteries: "Parallel to the army of educationally indifferent or hostile ascetics, we encounter a large part of the most learned and controversial philosophers and humanists there."[54] However, cultivating such figures is not an effect of the monastic rules themselves. Unlike western rules, beginning with the *Regula Benedicti*, Byzantine monastic rules and instructions do not include intellectual activity as a necessary element of the system. From Basil the Great it can already be learned that reading not only "our books" and Sacred Scripture, but also beneficial Hellenic literature should not be rejected. Rather it is regarded as complementary, something of a propaedeutic and ephemeral character with no necessary connection with the highest goal of monastic life—the uninterrupted praising of the Lord and approach to the angels.[55]

Discussing the differences between the modes of existence of human nature before and after the fall, Maximus the Confessor defines the arts, practiced for the sake of utility, and rational knowledge of the principles of nature as phenomena of the postlapsarian state. Originally (κατ' ἀρχήν) they did not move man by necessity (ἐξ ἀνάγκης). The perfection of man needed only unmedi-

50 Ibid., 14, in: PG 88, 1200C.

51 Simeon Novus Theologus, Capita theologica, gnostica et practica, 24, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Chapitres théologiques, gnostiques et pratiques*, ed. J. Darrouzès (Sources Chrétiennes 51bis), Paris 1996, 52, 21–27.

52 Johannes Climacus, Liber ad pastorem, 11, in: PG 88, 1188A.

53 Cf. G. Kapriev, Was heißt „theologisch gebildet" in Byzanz?, in: *Theologie und Bildung im Mittelalter*, eds. P. Gemeinhardt, T. Georges (Archa verbi, Subsidia 13), Münster 2015, 393–408.

54 G. Podskalsky, *Theologie und Philosophie in Byzanz*, München 1977, 36.

55 Basilius Magnus, Sermo de legendis libris gentilium, 2, in: PG 31, 568B–588B; Basilius Magnus, Sermo asceticus, 10, in: PG 31, 648C. Cf. G. Kapriev, Intellektuelle und körperliche Arbeit in der byzantinischen Mönchstradition, in: *Geistige und körperliche Arbeit im Mittelalter*, eds. G. Mensching, A. Mensching-Estakhr, Würzburg 2016, 199–203.

ated (ἄσχετος) movement around God. In the paradisiac mode of existence, cognition was not achieved through "natural vision" (περί τήν φύσιν θεωρίας), i.e. through the faculties of natural, discursive reason, but through the immediate knowledge of wisdom.[56]

The dominant view was that the discursive activity of reason and the arts are not a constitutive element of sacred or monastic life, but rather have a supplementary character. These abilities are given to man as compensatory mechanisms, so that he or she can compensate for the loss of the immediate knowledge of God and life in proximity to God, at least to a certain extent. They are intended as complementary activities, incidentally accompanying prayer and spiritual contemplation, and can only be given approval from the perspective of the needs of man's current mode of existence.

4.1.4 The Reading of Books

Reference to the written word remains problematic against this background. Indeed, monks are obligated to read the Holy Scriptures and to know the Psalms and the New Testament by heart. It is also recommended that they read the writings of the great Christian authors. In a separate dedicated chapter ("On Reading"), Gregory of Sinai provides advice, citing Climacus: When you are active, look for correct knowledge in the practical writings (τὰ ἀναγινωσκόμενα πρακτικά). If you transform these into action, all other reading becomes superfluous. Always read about Hesychia and prayer![57] Leave the other [writings] aside for the time being, not because they are to be rejected, but because they are incompatible with the objective, in so far as their explorations (ἱστορίαι) cause the *nous* to deviate from prayer.[58] According to him, too, prayer and silence are the primary sources of knowledge.[59] Based on this premise, reading is regarded as secondary and complementary to practice.

From this perspective it is claimed that the knowing hesychast has no need of any kind of written word (λόγος) because he is enlightened by the Logos of the works.[60] Those enlightened by practice, says Symeon, do not need instruc-

56 Maximus Confessor, Ambigua ad Ioannem (AmbIo), 45, in: PG 91, 1353C–1356A. Engl. transl. N. Constas in: Maximos the Confessor, The Ambigua, Cmabridge, Mass.–London 2014.

57 He recommends the writings of few authors: John Climacus, Isaac the Syrian, Maximus Confessor, Symeon the New Theologian, Nicetas Stethatos, Hesychios, Philotheus Sinaites and "the others who wrote about the same thing in the same way".

58 Gregorius Sinaites, De quietudine et duobus orationis modis, 11, in: PG 150, 1326CD.

59 Cf. Gregorius Sinaites, Capita valde utilia per acrostichidem disposita, 104, in: PG 150, 1273C.

60 Ibid., 27, in: PG 150, 1097B.

tion from people but, enlightened by the Spirit, they see the Son, contemplate the Father, and worship the Trinity of Persons, the one God.[61] The knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) of true wisdom and knowledge of God cannot be obtained through written explanations and teachings.[62]

4.1.5 Written Activity

The spiritual teacher is called upon to expound his instructions in writing as well.[63] However, emphasis is placed on the insufficiency of verbal and written discourse in this situation.[64] Nicetas Stethatos explains four reasons for writing about soul-saving matters. The first is freedom, i.e. the dispassion of the soul, which through laborious activity has attained the natural vision of creation and therefore entered into the depths of theology. The second is the purity of the mind-νοῦς, achieved through tears and prayer, from which comes the flow of salvific thoughts. The third is the establishment within us of the Holy Trinity, from which the outpouring of the Spirit's light comes forth for the benefit of every purified person and causes them to acquire God's hidden treasures in the soul. The fourth is the God-given necessity that concerns everyone who possesses the divine talent of reason (τὸ τάλαντον τοῦ λόγου).[65]

Gregory Palamas confirms the fundamental validity of solitary silence as a basic position. Preaching and writing are also accounted for as a dimension of spiritual experience. However, writing is evaluated as an opening up of cares, risking error and diverting activity. For this reason, he notes, several of the fathers, perfected in *hesychia*, refrained from writing, although they could have shared many great and useful things. Palamas admits that, although he lacks a writer's ethos, he writes under the pressure of necessity.[66] Without doubt, he means the necessity of confronting those who would mislead or lead astray.

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61 Simeon Novus Theologus, Hymni, 21, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Hymnes 16–40*, ed. J. Koder (Sources chrétiennes 174), Paris 1971, 138,102–106.

62 Simeon Novus Theologus, Tractatus, Eth. 9, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Traités théologiques et éthiques II*, ed. J. Darrouzès (Sources chrétiennes 129), Paris 1967, 220,10–14.

63 Johannes Climacus, Liber ad pastorem, 6, in: PG 88, 1180A. Cf. Simeon Novus Theologus, Catecheses, 22, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Catéchèses II*, ed. B. Krivochéine (Sources Chrétiennes 104), Paris 1964, 390, 329–332.

64 Simeon Novus Theologus, Catecheses, 29, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Catéchèses II*, ed. B. Krivochéine (Sources Chrétiennes 104), Paris 1964, 330, 224–229; 245–246.

65 Nicetas Pectoratus, Capita practica. Centuria prima, 1, in: PG 120, 852AB.

66 Gregorius Palamas, Ad Xeniam monacham, 1–3, in: *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα*, τ. 5, επιμ. Π. Χρήστου, Θεσσαλονίκη 1992 (ed. Christou v), 193, 1–194, 18.

There are, Gregory Sinaites suggests, three reasons that can motivate those gifted with the Spirit to compose books: for their own memory, for the benefit of others, for the sake of obedience.[67]

Any other motivation to be a writer, he stresses, such as the desire to please people, the pursuit of fame, or the ambition to reveal oneself, brings no benefit either in this world or the next, and such a writer is condemned as vain and a cunning falsifier of the divine word.[68] According to Symeon's verdict, the Holy Spirit does not inspire the writings of glory seekers, rhetoricians, philosophers, that is, those who have studied and examined Hellenic and external writings.[69]

4.1.6 Suspicions around Intellectual Activity

The monks who devoted themselves to such studies were in principle under suspicion. An example of this is the expulsion of the learned hesychast Gregory Acindynus by the Athonite monks in 1332, the main reason being that the monks on Athos were angered by his learning in Hellenic philosophy and literature, as can be seen from an unedited homily of patriarch Callistus I.[70] Gregory Palamas, who otherwise attributes to Acindynus erroneous practices in prayer and demonic visions accordingly, does not fail to mention the harmful influence on him of "Hellenic delusion."[71] Another example can be seen in the synodal condemnation of the Thomist Prochorus Cydones. The *Tomos* of 1368 identifies his erudition as an incriminating motive, emphasizing that he was attracted by Hellenic learning (ματαιότης τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν) due to some perverse influence and had deeply absorbed its false doctrines (κακοδοξία). Among the disciples of the Hellenes, Prochorus was the first and greatest. By not being able to practice *hesychia* he constructed a καινοφωία (a new way of speaking) and represents an impious way of thinking (φρόνημα).[72] The *Tomos* also

67 Gregorius Sinaites, Capita valde utilia per acrostichidem disposita, 137, in: PG 150, 1300AB.

68 Ibid.

69 Simeon Novus Theologus, Catecheses, 21, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Catéchèses II*, ed. B. Krivochéine (Sources Chrétiennes 104), Paris 1964, 134, 49–57.

70 Cf. J. Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, New York, 1974, 40; J. Nadal Cañellas, Gregorio Akíndinos, in: *La théologie Byzantine et sa tradition*, vol. II, eds. G. Conticello, V. Conticello, Turnhout 2002, 194–195.

71 Gregorius Palamas, Antirrhetika contra Akindynon, VII, 16, 59, in: Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα, τ. 3, επιμ. Π. Χρήστου, Θεσσαλονίκη 1970 (ed. Christou III), 505, 20–21.

72 Tomos synodicos 1368, ed. Rigo 33–54; PG 151, 694AB. The *Tomos* is quoted after the critical edition in *Gregorio Palamas e oltre*, ed. A. Rigo, Firenze 2004, 99–134, by lines, as well as after the edition in *Patrologia Graeca* by columns and the corresponding pagination.

attacks the fact that his λογισμοί (reasoning, thoughts) and proofs are colored by Aristotelian syllogisms.[73] High erudition was confronted by the practice of the monastic way of life.

Examples of this kind can be multiplied. However, they do not call Podskalsky's assertion cited above into question. On the one hand, there are far-reaching differences between various monasteries in different periods of Byzantine history. On the other, one has to take into account the fact that many people became monks after they were established as authoritative thinkers. Michael Psellus himself was a monk for almost a year, thanks to which we know him by his monastic, not his baptismal name, Constantine. Such persons were generally accepted with their already existing profiles. A considerable number of the masters of philosophical theology were monks and church dignitaries.

It is precisely theology that is attacked by the extreme advocates of experiential theology. Even knowledge of the vast majority of external sciences (μορὰ τῶν ἔξω μαθημάτων), or the compilation and writing of fine words, will be of no use to you, Symeon warns, when my God begins to judge us all.[74] The one who teaches but is not enlightened by the Spirit of God is not a true teacher but a liar and deceiver because he lacks true wisdom, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ within himself.[75]

Symeon the New Theologian and his followers prefer to talk about experience (πεῖρα) or practice whenever they refer to spiritual enlightenment. In contrast, they usually equate what is designated by "theology" and "philosophy." Gregory Palamas, who does not contradictorily oppose the spiritual and rational spheres of knowledge, nevertheless declares that theological experience, conceived as θεογνωσία (knowledge of God), is the means of knowledge through which everything becomes unquestionably clear.[76] It transcends both philosophy and speculative theology, which are considered to be at the same level of knowledge. He draws a distinction between the vision of God in light (ἐν φωτὶ θεοπτία) and theology, which is carried out through the spoken word and

73 Tomos synodicos 1368, ed. Rigo, 241–243; PG 151, 699B.

74 Simeon Novus Theologus, Hymni, 31, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Hymnes 16–40*, ed. J. Koder (Sources chrétiennes 174), Paris 1971, 396, 153–157.

75 S. Simeon Novus Theologus, Tractatus moralia, 15, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Traités théologiques et éthiques II*, ed. J. Darrouzès (Sources chrétiennes 129), Paris 1967, 456, 186–458, 189.

76 Gregorius Palamas, Triades, II, 2, 9, in: *Ἰρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα*, τ. 1, επιμ. Π. Χρήστου, Θεσσαλονίκη 1962 [*The Writings of Gregory Palamas*, ed. P. Christou, Thessalonike 1962] (ed. Christou I), 515, 10–11.

the corresponding art of expression, reflection, syllogisms and proofs. Accessible even to wise secular people, this theology is equated with "verbose philosophy." In comparison with the knowledge described as "spiritual contemplation," "Divine vision," "encounter with God," "mystical and unspeakable vision and pre-tasting (θεωρία καὶ γεῦσις) of the eternal light,"[77] the rational knowledge of God is insufficient. Theology does not leave the space of words, of logical discourse.[78] It remains in the area of judgments, syllogisms and proofs.[79] The task of discursive theology is to articulate the true knowledge of God and to make it understandable to those who do not have the experience of knowing Him and are yet striving for it.[80]

4.2 *Philosophical Theology*

The concept of "theology," denoting speculative theology, finds its formulation in Photius' scientific doctrine. He conceptualizes it as a speculative reflection on theological topics, in the way it was usually done in the whole preceding tradition.

4.2.1 Theology of Revelation as a Basis of Theological Discourse

Photius does not reject the designation of theology as the self-expression of God, established in revelation and Holy Scripture. It concerns the theology endowed by the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete. Man cannot reach it by himself. It bears witness to the tri-unity of the Trinity and differs from economy (οἰκονομία), which, in turn, encompasses creation, incarnation, redemption and all that is connected with them.[81] With regard to revealed theology, Photius speaks of both "experience" (πεῖρα) and "knowledge" (ἐπιστήμη), associating the Word of truth with the contemplation of Trinitarian theology (θεωρία τῆς τριαδικῆς θεολογίας).[82] The theological experience, which ultimately has a deeply personal character, is presented in the form of "mystagogy," "hierology," or "hymnology."[83] At this point, he follows Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, speaking of the grace-given knowledge of the theologians, or holy men, who—like

77 It is still determined as "recognition of God in God"—Gregorius Palamas, Triades, II, 3, 12, ed. Christou I, 690, 26–27.

78 Gregorius Palamas, Epistula I ad Barlaam, 52, ed. Christou I, 290, 5–28; Gregorius Palamas, Triades, I, 3, 42, ed. Christou I, 453, 8–9.

79 Gregorius Palamas, Triades, II, 1, 9; II, 3, 49, ed. Christou I, 472, 24–27; 582, 1–12.

80 Gregorius Palamas, Triades, I, 3, 42, ed. Christou I, 453, 6–454, 11.

81 Cf. Photius, Amphilochiae, 1, 14–15, in: PG 101, 64C–68A.

82 Ibid., 181, in: PG 101, 892C.

83 Ibid., 189, in: PG 101, 913D.

angels—express real theology in the form of ὑμνωδία. Those who follow in their footsteps preserve what they have already expressed and interpret it according to their respective powers of thought and speech.[84]

In this context, Maximus the Confessor makes a remark essential for both speculative theology and philosophy. He humbly asserts that he himself does not have the grace of experiential knowledge from God. Therefore he is able to interpret the testimonies of the saints only by means of philosophical reflection. For this reason, he can discuss the questions concerning theological issues only in the form of hypotheses and not affirmatively, that is, not with the claim of necessary truth (στοχαστικῶς, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀποφαντικῶς). In this regard, affirmative testimony is fitting only for the saints to whom divine enlightenment has been given. Therefore Maximus insists on caution in rational activity when it comes to reflection on theological mysteries.[85]

4.2.2 Discursive Theology

Photius of Constantinople is the first in the Byzantine tradition to also subsume the processes and results associated with the use of "godlike imaginations" (θεοπρεπείς φαντασίας), which ensure knowledge through analogy (δι' ἀναλογίας γνῶσις), into the concept of "theology."[86] Such "fantasies" include immutability, rest, immobility, identity, and so on. Formed in accordance with human nature,[87] they have a strictly discursive character and belong entirely to the realm of rational thought.[88] In this way Photius introduces a corrective into the previously established usage of the word theology, a corrective which remains valid throughout the subsequent cultural history of Byzantium. He employs expressions such as καθ' ἡμᾶς θεολγία or ἡ ἡμῶν θεολογία (theology according to us, our theology). Until then, these expressions were used in relation to philosophy, but not theology, which, as the self-expression of God, was meant as one and only.[89] They denote a διδασκαλία inspired by holy words and a discipline (μάθησις) reflecting on the supernatural.[90]

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84 De divinis nominibus (DN), 13, 4, in: *Corpus Dionysiacum 1*, ed. B.R. Suchla, Berlin-New York 1990 (ed. Suchla), 230, 6–14 (PG 3, 981C).

85 Maximus Confessor, AmbIo, 19, in: PG 91, 1232CD.

86 Photius, Amphilochiae, 180; 189, in: PG 101, 885AC; 913D.

87 Ibid., 182, in: PG, 101, 900B.

88 Cf. G. Kapriev, Die gottgebührenden Phantasien und die Gottesschau bei Photius, in: *Intellect and Imagination* (Rencontres de philosophie médiévale, 11), eds. M.C. Pacheco, J.F. Meirinhos, Turnhout 2006, 473–481.

89 Photius, Amphilochiae, 182, in: PG 101, 896C, 897D.

90 Ibid., 190, 4, in: PG 101, 920C.

Articulated theology is also not a unified concept. One must at least distinguish between dogmatic and speculative theology.

4.2.2.1 *Dogmatic Theology*

The elaboration of dogmatics itself entails intense philosophical activity. One example among many is the editing of the second article of the Creed, undertaken by the Second Ecumenical Council. In the second sentence of the Creed formulated at the Council of Nicaea, even before the philosophically coined term "consubstantial [with the Father]" (ὁμοούσιον [τῷ πατρί]) is mentioned, a related sentence appears—"born of the essence of the Father" (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρός [γεννηθέντα]).[91] This expression was omitted at the Council of Constantinople. The Creed of Nicaea (in its final clause) employs, almost synonymously, the terms hypostasis (ὑπόστασις) and essence (οὐσία). After the philosophical work of the Cappadocians, which provides definitions of essence and hypostasis, the imprecision of this subordinate clause becomes evident. After the dogmatization of the respective sentences, however, they no longer belong to the sphere of philosophical competence. They are not subject to discussion when it comes to doctrinal decisions or dogmatically founded canonical norms.

With regard to dogmatic theology, Theophylact of Bulgaria formulates the following thesis at the end of the 11th century: "We have no need for the syllogisms and logical argumentative procedures of the Hellenes." Contrary to the "psychics" of his time, he teaches that nothing in this field can be demonstrated by natural argumentative means (φυσικῇ ἀκολουθίᾳ). According to him, an explanation of Scripture through syllogisms and their external wisdom cannot encompass the actual wisdom of God, thus hindering the understanding of Scripture. Logical argument in this area is only capable of disturbing the weak mind and confusing it. Ultimately, cognitive ability comes from enlightenment through the Holy Spirit.[92] Theophylact's instructions acquired a regulatory power. "Scripture, fathers, councils, rational arguments" are established as a traditional hierarchy of evidential measures in the field of dogmatic theology.

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91 Cf. *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum*, eds. H. Denzinger, C. Bannwart, Freiburg Brsg. ^{27}1928, 54 (p. 30).

92 Theophylactus Bulgariae archiepiscopus, In Epistolam I ad Corinthos, 1, 17; 3, 14; 3, 15, in: PG 124, 577A; 596AB. Cf. P. Gemeinhardt, *Die Filioque-Kontroverse zwischen Ost- und Westkirche im Frühmittelalter*, Berlin–New York 2002, 498.

4.2.2.2 *Speculative Theology*

For its part, philosophical theology is *par excellence* a matter of human reason and remains within the realm of discursive and syllogistic argument, in which possible errors of thought are to be expected.[93] The legitimate results of this theology are at best *theologoumena*, which are well coordinated with dogmas, but in themselves do not make any claim to dogmatic validity. By ἡ ἡμῶν θεολογία Photius means exactly this area of thought. He determines theology to be the highest form of discursive knowledge, whose object is the Deity, removed from the bodily, the visible, and the material to the utmost degree. This reflection on the grace-given knowledge of God is considered the most sublime part of the first philosophy, the πρώτη φιλοσοφία.[94] Theology and philosophy are thus placed on a common level, where speculative theology assumes the role of the most worthy metaphysical discourse. As intellectual interpretation, philosophical or speculative theology is a human endeavor that can be criticized or denied. In subsequent times, speculative theology is interpreted in this way by both its opponents and its proponents.

Conceived in this way, theology includes all writings with theological content which cannot be subsumed into the field of so-called practical philosophy, i.e. asceticism, care for the soul, monastic instruction, preaching, etc. This circumstance requires the removal of an old prejudice: the assertion that, in Byzantium, theology was responsible, once and for all, for the metaphysical sphere. It is necessary to conclude that the case with speculative theology in Byzantium was precisely the reverse. Here philosophy played the guiding role.

Speculative theology is the highest domain of Christian philosophy. It is the field of philosophical-theological discussion in which one can fundamentally justify oneself by virtue of terminological precision and syllogistic argumentation. Indeed, in this context, the entire conceptual scope of "philosophy" is not meant, but theoretical philosophy, which is defined as "metaphysics" in Latin terminology. It corresponds with speculative theology and includes it within its own scope.[95]

4.2.2.3 *Dealing with External Authority*

The factual distinction between dogmatic and speculative—that is, philosophical—approaches to the theological subject area can be traced throughout

93 Cf. S.G. Papadopoulos, *Theologie und Sprache*, Göttingen 2007, 27–42.

94 Cf. Photius, Amphilochiae, 138; 181; 182; 190, 4, in: PG 101, 769A; 896C; 897D; 920C.

95 Cf. G. Kapriev, Was hat die Philosophie mit der Theologie zu tun? Der Fall Byzanz, in: *Byzantine Theology and its Philosophical Background*, eds. A. Rigo, P. Ermilov, M. Trizio (*Studies in Byzantine History & Civilization*, 4), Turnhout 2011, 4–16.

the entire work of Byzantine thinkers. Accordingly, the approach to philosophical and, in particular, Latin authorities is also different.

The position Marcus Eugenicus articulated during the Council of Ferrara-Florence is exemplary in this regard. On the one hand, he insists that it is his duty to preserve Orthodoxy and the Church dogmas inherited from the Fathers.[96] For this reason, he refuses to accept theses claiming to formulate dogmatic doctrines contradicting Orthodox Church teaching. Since these are axioms, they cannot be subject to argument or interpretation, regardless of the superior sanctity and erudition of the authors formulating them.[97]

However, his approach is entirely different when it comes to philosophical-theological speculation. In this field, Byzantine philosophers usually show willingness to debate and enter into dialogue with representatives of Latin theological culture, as well as adopt their logical methods. Marcus is broadly open to seeking answers to the arguments of his opponents and striving for solutions together with them.[98]

In his work, he insists that philosophical conclusions (including his own) have different degrees of certainty and necessity.[99] This does not mean, however, that philosophy is at most capable of making conjectures. On the contrary, he insists that the task of philosophy is to reach and defend the truth, even if this truth can only be achieved by rational reasoning.[100]

5 Philosophy

5.1 *The Ambiguity of the Term*

The term "philosophy" was not used with one and the same meaning in the Byzantine cultural context. In a very broad sense, the word "philosophy" was used to denote culture in general or manifestations of thought in all its diverse forms. The "practical" element was abundantly represented in the use of the

96 Marcus Eugenicus, Oratio prima de igne purgatorio, 1, in: *Patrologia Orientalis*, vol. 15, ed. L. Petit, Paris 1927, 40, 6–9.

97 Marcus Eugenicus, Oratio altera de igne purgatorio, 15, in: *Patrologia Orientalis*, vol. 15, ed. L. Petit, Paris 1927, 124, 17–27.

98 Marcus Eugenicus, Oratio prima de igne purgatorio, 1, in: *Patrologia Orientalis*, vol. 15, ed. L. Petit, Paris 1927, 39, 9–13.

99 Marcus Eugenicus, Morientis oratio ad amicos, B, in: *Patrologia orientalis*, vol. 17, ed. L. Petit, Paris 1923, 486, 14–487, 1.

100 Marcus Eugenicus, Ad Georgium Scholarium epistola, 1–2, in: *Patrologia orientalis*, vol. 17, ed. L. Petit, Paris 1923, 460, 7–461, 29.

word. In the novel *Barlaam and Joasaph*, John Damascene characterizes true philosophy as the correct Christian way of life.[101] The identification of monastic life with "philosophy," namely with "true philosophy," was no exception. As already mentioned, "philosophy" was defined in particular as the indwelling of the divine light. The true philosopher (ὁ ἀληθὴς φιλόσοφος), insists Gregory Palamas, is the one who is taught by spiritual experience.[102] Philotheus Kokkinos in his Λόγος ἐγκωμιαστικός on Gregory Palamas calls the monastic-ascetic life a philosophical one.[103] Its practice is determined as "divine philosophy",[104] which in this text Philotheus identifies with Christian philosophy, philosophy according to Christ (κατὰ Χριστὸν φιλοσοφία),[105] while also understanding the term "theology" to incorporate dialectical or speculative theology.[106] In a broader sense, as *meditatio mortis* as well as the art of the arts and science of the sciences, philosophy has been equated with right living.[107] Philosophy was still understood as the universal guide on the path to truth and in this perspective was almost identified with ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία.

The role of first concretization here is taken by the clarification that we are dealing with elevated topics requiring deep intellectual activity and concentration, not in the realm of the sensory and corporeal, but of the intelligible and noetic. This specification allows the introduction of criteria leading to the conceptual content of theoretical philosophy.

The specialized definition of philosophy as the study of the logos of being as being (λόγος τῶν ὄντων ᾗ ὄντα), that is, understanding it as knowledge of being achieved through natural human reason capable of discovering its real laws, was also interpreted diversely. The philosophical views of the polymath, the commentator and the hesychast, for example, differed significantly from one another, such that temporal and local divergences must also be taken into account.[108] One has to enlarge on the differences even further.

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101 Cf. PG 96, 992D, 993A, 993D.

102 Gregorius Palamas, Triades, I, 1, 17, ed. Christou I, 380, 9.

103 Philotheos Kokkinos, Λόγος ἐγκωμιαστικὸς εἰς τὸν ἐν ἁγίοις πατέρα ἡμῶν Γρηγόριον ἀρχιεπίσκοπον Θεσσαλονίκης [Encomiastic Oration on Our Holy Father Gregory, Archbishop of Thessalonica], in: PG 151, 563C.

104 Ibid., in: PG 151, 561C.

105 Ibid., in: PG 151, 569A.

106 Ibid., in: PG 151, 562D–563A.

107 Cf. M. Trizio, Byzantine Philosophy as a Contemporary Historiographical Project, in: *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiéval*, 1 (2007), 274–275.

108 Cf. ibid., 276.

5.2 *Philosophy Teaching and Written Activity*

In 529 Emperor Justinian ordered the closure of the Athenian school, founded by Emperor Marcus Aurelius in 176 and renewed around 410 by the Neoplatonist Plutarchus. Despite the presence of several professors who were Christians, it was perceived as a stronghold of Hellenic paganism. Damascius, Simplicius and five other Athenian Neoplatonists settled at the court of the Persian Shah in 531. Following the peace treaty of 532 between the "philosopher king" Khosrow I and Justinian, through which, among other things, the émigré philosophers were guaranteed safety, they moved back to the Roman Empire.

The subject of philosophy was widely represented in the Byzantine general education curriculum. This mostly concerned a general approach to the legacy of Hellenic philosophy with a focus on Aristotle and Plato. Most of the commentaries on their works are didactic notes made by teachers. Despite some interesting developments and explanations, and with a few exceptions, these commentaries serve an educational purpose and are aimed at pedagogical goals.[109] Philosophy education at a higher level—institutionally as well as individually—was more of a private matter and was generally acquired in private schools.[110]

The term "higher schools" should not be understood as "universities" in the occidental sense of the word. Indeed, at various times and on the initiative of individual emperors, state educational institutions were established in Constantinople. This first happened in 425 during the reign of Theodosius and for the last time by law. The higher school likely existed until the beginning of the Iconoclastic disputes. In the 840s, Caesar Bardas undertook the next successful attempt, which ended in 866 with the founder's death. A higher school probably also functioned during the reign of Emperor Constantine VII in the 10th century. In 1043, on the initiative of John Xiphilinus and Michael Psellus, Emperor Constantine IX ordered the establishment of a higher school for law and philosophy, which operated for several decades. The re-establishment of state-supported higher education in the city took place after 1261. Teaching there was associated with figures such as George Akropolites,[111] Manuel

109 On the Byzantine tradition of commentary, see the paragraphs of M. Trizio „Der griechische Sprachkreis und die byzantinische Kommentartradition" and „Byzantinische Kommentare zum Corpus Aristotelicum" in: *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, 32.2 (2007), 172–177 and 32.3 (2007), 285–290.

110 On scientific education, its methods and institutions, cf. I.P. Martin, D. Manolova, Science Teaching and Learning Methods in Byzantium, in: *A Companion to Byzantine Science*, ed. S. Lazaris, Leiden 2020, 53–104.

111 Cf. W. Blum, Das Leben des Georgios Akropolites, in: W. Blum, *Humanistische Reisen*, München 2002, 121–138; G. Kapriev, Georgios Akropolites, in: *Byzanz. Judentum* (Grundriss

Holobolos,[112] Maximus Planudes.[113] At this time, too, the school at the Constantinopolitan Monastery of St. John the Baptist of Petra began to play a more significant role. In addition, the teaching method in these higher schools entirely depended on the personality of the teacher and knew no continuity.[114]

Linos Benakis also points out that Byzantine high schools, referred to as "universities" by some researchers, were schools for functionaries. With the exception of a few educational structures supported by emperors and patriarchs at various times, higher philosophical education was obtained in private schools, he states. "And wherever there was an upswing in education and philosophical studies, the main reason for this was the extraordinary character of the personalities themselves acting at that time."[115]

This is particularly evident in schools that sporadically emerged in some other cities. They were dominated and led by an authoritative teacher and usually declined after his retirement or death. The only exception was Thessaloniki. Educational structures began to be formed in the city as early as the 12th century and this became particularly intensive around the middle of the 13th century. Different philosophical trends represented by prominent scholars of the epoch competed with each other. In 1430 the city fell under Ottoman rule and the teaching of philosophy faded away.[116]

The higher philosophical schools, essentially concentrated in Constantinople, were not homogeneous or coordinated in any respect. The choice of school and teacher was a matter for the learner. His admission was at the mercy of the teacher's arbitrariness. The pursuit of knowledge mediated the student-

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der Geschichte der Philosophie, begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg, Die Philosophie des Mittelalters, Bd. 1), eds. A. Brungs, G. Kapriev, V. Mudroch, Basel 2019, 98–99.

112 Cf. G. Kapriev, Manuel Holobolos, in: *Byzanz. Judentum* (Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie, begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg, Die Philosophie des Mittelalters, Bd. 1), eds. A. Brungs, G. Kapriev, V. Mudroch, Basel 2019, 99–100.

113 Cf. M. Trizio, "Un omo sapiente et apostolico". Agostino a Byzanzio: Gregorio Palamas lettore del *De trinitate*, in: *Qaestio*, 6 (2006), 134–148; G. Kapriev, Manuel-Maximos Planudes, in: *Byzanz. Judentum* (Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie, begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg, Die Philosophie des Mittelalters, Bd. 1), eds. A. Brungs, G. Kapriev, V. Mudroch, Basel 2019, 108–110.

114 Cf. F. Fuchs, *Die höheren Schulen von Konstantinopel im Mittelalter*, Leipzig 1926, *passim*. New edition: Berlin 2020; P. Schreiner, *Konstantinopel. Geschichte und Archäologie*, München ²2015, 114–117.

115 L. Benakis, Die theoretische und praktische Autonomie der Philosophie, in L.G. Benakis, *Texts and Studies on Byzantine Philosophy 1*, Athens 2002, 99.

116 Cf. Λ. Μπενάκης, Μακεδονία: Ἡ Φιλοσοφία στὴν Βυζαντινὴ περίοδο [Macedonia: Philosophy in the Byzantine Period], in: L. Benakis, *Texts and Studies on Byzantine Philosophy 1*, Ἀθήνα 2002, 523–531; F. Tinnefeld, Intellectuals in Late Byzantine Thessalonike, in: *Dumbarton Oaks papers*, 57 (2003), 153–172.

teacher relationship, in which the personality of the teacher played a primary, but not binding role. The course of lessons was determined by the interests of the teachers, but also the students. The teacher-student relationship took the form of a dialogue between equals. This relationship did not require the submission of the student. The relationship with the teacher was far from being unbreakable and its existential bearing was by no means decisive. In Byzantium, philosophical schools did not emerge. Representatives of the only community that ought to be defined in this way, namely Byzantine Thomism, were also not in unanimous agreement. Historically, conceptual clashes between former classmates or between former teachers and students have been documented. Usually, however, teachers and their students formed a circle of friends that remained intact even after they had finished school.[117]

There was rarely an opportunity for a public philosophical-professional career. The attainment of philosophical qualifications took place primarily through verbal dialogue within a given circle of friends. This explains the fact that there are few Byzantine thinkers active as writers. Ihor Ševćenko points out that during the whole of the 14th century in Byzantium, there were only about 100 people who were active as writers at all, with around 60 of them living and working in Constantinople. He insists that every author from the 14th century is known to us through their life and work. This means that, in the capital, the proportion of writers to non-writers was approximately 1:4000. This proportion is even more remarkable outside the capital. In addition, estimates show that, throughout the entire Byzantine period, about 435 writers in all fields and genres are known to us.[118]

One well-known phenomenon is that systematic writing in the field of philosophy and speculative theology is very scarce. Apart from propaedeutic writings, most theological and philosophical texts have a polemical character. The ultimate goal of intellectual effort was not the text, but the acquisition of intellectual or spiritual wisdom. The real purpose was personal perfection. As a result, the philosopher usually began to write only when he perceived a truth already established for him as being threatened by someone else's words or writing.[119]

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117 G. Kapriev, Lehrer und Schüler in der geistlichen und geistigen Kultursituation von Byzanz, in: *Schüler und Meister* (*Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 39), eds. A. Speer, T. Jeschke, Berlin–Boston 2016, 407–422.

118 I. Ševćenko, Society and Intellectual Live in the Fourteenth Century, in: Id., *Society and Intellectual Live in Late Byzantium*, Variorum Reprints, London 1981, I, 69–74.

119 Cf. G. Kapriev, Byzanz. Eine Kultur des unerschöpflichen Logos und der spärlichen Schriftproduktion, in: *Vom Körper zur Schrift*, eds. M. Schnitter, E. Vavra, H. Wenzel, Sofia 2007, 15–30.

5.3 *The Independence of the Philosophers*

Byzantine philosophers generally did not mention the names of their teachers. Many of them would claim that they did not have teachers. Sometimes the reason for this was the fact that they had studied with several teachers. Autodidacts were also among the philosophically educated. Self-education was not an extraordinary rarity in Byzantium, but by and large it was not a principle. The overall picture was not determined by such cases.

The most striking statement in this respect is probably Michael Psellus' claim that he did not meet any worthy teachers of philosophy. He had found wisdom to be almost dead and had managed to revive it through his own efforts. He had discovered the seeds of wisdom neither among the Hellenes nor among the Barbarians, and had therefore found his own path to the first philosophy through his own efforts.[120] It is now known, thanks to Psellus himself as well, that his philosophy teacher was John Mauropous. George Scholarius also recalls in the style of Psellus that he did not have qualified teachers in the field of philosophy, emphasizing his self-education and listing the authors he studied.[121] However, he himself testifies in writing[122] that he was a student of Marcus Eugenicus, who operated as a popular philosophy teacher in Constantinople. On other occasions Scholarius mentions the names of John Chortasmenus and Macarius Makres as his teachers. George of Cyprus (Gregory II) lovingly describes how he appreciated his teacher George Akropolites, but declares himself to be the perpetuator not of his, but of Aristotelian doctrine,[123] which he also does not follow devotedly.

The trope that Byzantine philosophers did not have teachers does not imply that they did not study philosophy under anyone but rather that they did not continue the philosophical program of anyone else and instead developed their own. The student did not feel obliged to follow the teachings of his teacher. In principle he developed his own. From this perspective, Psellus allows himself to call his teacher and his fellow student (probably also a teacher) John Xiphili-

120 Michael Psellus, Chronographia, VI, 37–38, in: Michael Psellus, *The History of Psellus*, ed. C. Sathas, London 1899, 107, 29–108, 19 (ed. Sathas).

121 *Oeuvres complètes de Gennade Scholarios*, eds. L. Petit, X.A. Sidéridès, M. Jugie, t. VII, Paris 1936, 2, 11–14, 6.

122 Cf. *Oeuvres complètes de Gennade Scholarios*, eds. L. Petit, X.A. Sidéridès, M. Jugie, t. IV, Paris 1935, 116–118.

123 *The Autobiography of George of Cyprus* (*Ecumenical Patriarch Gregory II*), ed. A. Pelendrides, Nicosie 1993 (the edition copies the Greek text from W. Lameere, *La tradition manuscrite de la correspondance de Grégoire de Chypre, patriarche de Constantinople* (*1283–1289*), Bruxelles 1937, 177–191), 34, 179–185 (ed. Pelendrides).

nus "lovers of philosophy" (ἐρασταί τῆς φιλοσοφίας), while he glorifies himself as a complete philosopher (ἐγὼ δὲ ἐφιλοσόφουν τὰ τελεώτερα).[124]

As mentioned above, high-level philosophizing and scientific erudition are demonstrated in due measure in the private lifeworld. The Byzantine philosopher's ideal and authentic life situation was attainment within a private scholarly circle.

5.4 *The Autonomy of Philosophy*

The obligation to hold public office, the taking of which was often enough observed, was defined as an "evil necessity,"[125] a deprivation of freedom and a compromising of integrity. Gregory II complains that by ascending to the "highest among the patriarchal thrones" he became involved in quarrels about dogmatic novelties, church conflicts, and the care of souls, all after having entertained the idea of dedicating his life to philosophy, that is, to being a free man (ἐλεύθερος). For a philosopher and a free person in general, it is appropriate to live in "unemployment."[126] According to him, the philosopher and the free man, philosophy and free life outside the public sphere are synonymous. Philosophy and the other sciences are what is worthy for humans[127] because they provide truth and freedom. Human perfection is fundamentally defined by freedom, realized through education, study of philosophy, teaching and writing.[128]

Not only friendships between students and teachers and among fellow students were non-obligatory. The private character of practicing philosophy allows mastery over other independent realms. Photius already says that it is about an "unpunished lifestyle."[129] The philosophers made a point of not following the position of a particular—Byzantine or Hellenic—predecessor or school. They felt free to form their teachings, methods, and problematics independently. Personal positions are usually explained through concepts and approaches that come from different traditions, precisely because the philosopher is either not influenced by these traditions at all or only superficially.[130] The philosopher felt free of any dependencies.

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124 Psellus, Chronographia, VI, 192, ed. Sathas, 175, 9–10.

125 *The Autobiography of George of Cyprus*, ed. Pelendrides, 40, 267.

126 Ibid., 38, 243–245.

127 Ibid., 26, 86–32, 156.

128 Cf. G. Kapriev, Ein literarisches Selbstporträt aus dem byzantinischen 13. Jahrhundert. Georgios von Zypern / Gregorius II. und seine „Autobiographie": in: *Figurationen des Porträts*, eds. T. Greub, M. Roussel, Paderborn 2018, 471–489.

129 Photius, Epistularum Liber II, Epistula 2, in: PG 102, 597A.

130 Cf. M. Constas, Maximus the Confessor, Dionysius the Areopagite, and the Transforma-

The model was outlined as early as the 3rd century by Origen's disciple Gregory Thaumaturgus: "Nothing said was forbidden to us, nothing hidden, nor inaccessible. It was up to us to appropriate and study every teaching (λόγος), be it barbaric or Hellenic, mystical or secular (καὶ μυστικώτερος καὶ πολιτικώτερος), divine or human. With all parrhesia (συὺ πάσῃ παῤῥησίᾳ) we tackled all this and we explored it. We tasted it and enjoyed abundantly the goods of the soul. Whenever an ancient truth teaching, or whatever it was called, lay before us, we received through it equipment and a capacity to contemplate the admirable and complete objects."[131]

In this freedom lies the core of the autonomy of philosophical thought, philosophy and philosophers in Byzantium. It serves as the basis both for methodological autonomy from ecclesiastically established theology and the practical autonomy of philosophy as a discipline and, to a lesser extent, for its institutional independence and its autonomy from the theological subject and its consequent obligations.[132] Against this background, it is justifiable to speak about various philosophical projects in Byzantium or about different philosophies, perceptibly distinguishable from each other, with each philosopher having their own original approach, accepting and applying elements from whichever traditions they might adopt.[133] One may even claim *cum grano salis* that in Byzantium there were as many philosophies as there were philosophers.

5.5 *The Many Shapes of Theoretical Philosophy*

Today the voices that want to preach an "essential character" of philosophy in Byzantium are an insignificant minority. Claims that a philosophical essence exists can only be made on the basis of current ideological theory.[134] Neither in Byzantium nor elsewhere has there been a single and constant philosophy with a monolithic form and unequivocal continuity. Theoretical philosophy is primarily a method of thought and critical reflection. In order to transform it into an "essence," one would need to undertake an ideologically underpinned objectification of the method.

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tion of Christian Neoplatonism, in: *Analogia*, 2 (2017), 1–12; G. Kapriev, Wichtige Stationen der Wirkungsgeschichte. Byzanz, in: *Platon-Handbuch*, eds. C. Horn, J. Müller, J. Söder, Stuttgart–Weimar 2009, 434.

131 Gregorius Thaumaturgus, Oratio panegyrica in Origenem, 15, in: PG 10, 1096AB.

132 L. Benakis, Die theoretische und praktische Autonomie der Philosophie als Fachdisziplin in Byzanz, in: L. Benakis, *Text and Studies on Byzantine Philosophy*, Athens 2002, 97–100.

133 Cf. T.T. Tollefsen, *The Christian Metaphysics of St. Maximus the Confessor: Creation, World-Order, and Redemption*, Turnhout 2023, 17.

134 Cf. e.g. in N. Siniossoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium. Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon*, Cambridge 2011, 19, 40 and 397.

It is historically correct to emphasize the diversity of philosophical programs within Byzantine culture. It is legitimate to insist that each one of these philosophical "projects" (and ideally, each individual philosophical position) should be considered according to its own measure and in its own unique context.[135] However, sticking only to this perspective runs the risk of losing the conceptual perspective on the field of philosophical culture relatively easily and thus sacrificing the specificity of historical-philosophical research.

For this reason, Katerina Ierodiakonou points out that, on the one hand, Byzantine philosophical thought in fact incorporates several different doctrines and various ways of philosophical life. On the other hand, she agrees with the thesis that it is possible to establish the originality of such thought, by which it differs from ancient or contemporary philosophy and their corresponding concepts of philosophy. While defending the multifaceted nature and discontinuity of this tradition, she does agrees neither with the thesis that there is a single "true face" of philosophy in Byzantium nor with the thesis that there are "many philosophies." For her, the important thing is simply to speak about the many faces of Byzantine philosophy.[136] In general, I am in solidarity with this position.

There are general basic points of theoretical philosophy recognized by Byzantine thinkers themselves. They allow the non-essentialist and non-arbitrary establishment of the tradition's common boundaries and constitutive elements, as well as the non-ideological derivation of features that allows for the explanation of the differentiation between various tendencies within this tradition.[137]

5.6 *Characteristics of Theoretical Philosophy*

5.6.1 "Our Philosophy"

The views of the Cappadocians are significant in defining philosophy. As a first step, distance from the pagan tradition is established. The ἡ ἔξω or ἔξωθεν φιλοσοφία, "external" philosophy, is rejected, condemned particularly for being "vain" (ματαία φιλοσοφία) and opposed to "our philosophy" (ἡ ἡμετέρα or καθ' ἡμᾶς φιλοσοφία). The philosophy practiced by Christians should not be in contradiction to the truth of faith. It is primarily a method that serves for the

135 Cf. M. Trizio, Byzantine Philosophy as a Contemporary Historiographical Project, in: *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiéval*, 1 (2007), 288–294.

136 K. Ierodiakonou, Byzantine Philosophy Revisited (a decade after), in: *The Many Faces of Byzantine Philosophy*, eds. B. Bydén, K. Ierodiakonou, Athens 2012, 1–21.

137 G. Kapriev, Philosophy in Byzantium and Byzantine Philosophy, in: *The Ways of Byzantine Philosophy*, ed. M. Knežević, Alhambra, California 2015, 1–8.

improvement of personal human existence. This involves a state of mind-νοῦς that does not require surpassing human capabilities. This state is a certain form of mental activity that operates within the limits of human capability and realizes human potentials.[138] It is an activity that proceeds according to the laws of reason.[139] Particularly extensive descriptions of the nature of philosophy are found in the works of Gregory of Nazianzus.

5.6.1.1 *Gregory the Theologian*

"We are born with reason and are directed through reason towards the Logos (διὰ λόγου πρὸς Λόγον σπεύδοντες)."[140] This statement by Gregory the Theologian is preceded by the consideration that we are obligated either to philosophize or to respect philosophy, if we do not want to, to fall away from the Good completely and be condemned for unreason (ἀλογία).[141]

Oration 25 of Gregory the Theologian praises Chiron the Philosopher, in that Gregory describes himself not as a "philosopher," but as a "servant of wisdom," σοφίας θεραπευτής, thus nevertheless philosophizing.[142] It expands on important functions and characteristics of philosophy.

Gregory consistently defines theoretical philosophy as the universal rational guide to the way to truth. It concerns the activity of natural human reason engaged with the most sublime subjects. The first task of philosophy is to bear witness to the truth and to refute false philosophy, which exhausts itself in loose words and seductive eloquence, as well as heresies.[143] It confers domination over the passions, as well as detachment from material things, and helps us to dwell on the unchangeable.[144] Against this background, the philosopher becomes capable of speaking justly before princes (δικαιολογία) and boldly before emperors (παῤῥησία).[145] At the end of Oration 25, Gregory declares himself ready to philosophize with the philosopher (συμφιλοσοφήσομεν) according to his own abilities.[146]

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138 Cf. Gregorius Nazianzenus, Oratio 4 (Contra Julianum I), in: PG 35, 633C: „ἐν ὅροις δεῖ μένοντας τῆς ἡμετέρας φιλοσοφίας καὶ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης δυνάμεως".

139 An overview of the conception of philosophy among the Cappadocians cf. in: A.-M. Malingrey, *„Philosophia". Étude d'un grouppe de mots dans la litérature grecque, des Présocratiques au IV ciecle après J. C.*, Paris 1961, 207–261.

140 Gregorius Nazianzenus, Oratio 25, 1, in: PG 35, 1197A.

141 Ibid.

142 Ibid.

143 Ibid., 1 et 15, in: PG 35, 1200A; 1220A.

144 Ibid., 4, in: PG 35, 1201D–1204A.

145 Ibid., 7, in: PG 35, 1208A.

146 Ibid., 18, in: PG 35, 1224C.

In his *Theological Orations*, Gregory the Theologian frequently uses the verb "to philosophize" with regard to what he himself develops in these speeches. Thus it denotes the knowledge that humans can attain and transmit through their thought and speech. In this way, it differs from what is experienced through revelation. Philosophy is the activity of reason, which also has as its task the discursive explication of theological contents. Nevertheless, Gregory has in mind "our philosophy" or "the philosophy of the noble," which is the activity of reason leading towards God and distinguishes itself from "external philosophy," which merely plays with shadows of truth.[147]

5.6.1.2 Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite

The *Corpus Areopagiticum*—the texts of Dionysius's the Pseudo-Areopagite and the early scholia on them (by John of Scythopolis and Maximus the Confessor) that are considered an integral part of the work—fundamentally adopts the same position. In Dionysius, "philosophy" is a *terminus technicus*. Indeed, he rigorously establishes (a rigor further emphasized by the authors of the scholia) the boundary between "our" and "external"—Hellenic—philosophy.[148] However, recognizing a philosopher as a representative of one or the other tradition does not lead to a priori judgments. Both Dionysius and the scholiasts speak positively about certain theses and "high words" of Hellenic philosophers. The conflict occurs in the field of syllogistic proofs, without demonstrations of provisional superiority.[149]

Philosophy is the realization of the capacity for understanding (νόησις) and verbally expressing (ἔκφρασις) what has been understood.[150] Its means are concepts, judgments and conclusions. Philosophy and its corresponding epistemological practices remain in the realm of discourse, the rationally attainable and conceptually articulable, of affirmations and negations, of logical conclusions and syllogistics.[151] Formally, this practice stands close to human wisdom (or "external philosophy"), which draws its proofs from the realm of the sensual and is pushed towards the methods of geometry by the need for syllogisms.[152] And it is precisely here, in the field of philosophy and in philosophizing, that

147 Ibid., 4, in: PG 35, 1204A.

148 Cf. e.g. Scholion in De divinis nominibus (DN) 1, 1, in: PG 4, 188BC; Scholion in DN 5, 2, in: PG 4, 231A; Scholion in DN 5, 7, in: PG 4, 321D.

149 Cf. Scholion in DN 4, 20, in: PG 4, 284AC, Scholion in DN 4, 22, in: PG 4, 288BC, Scholion in DN 4, 27 (PG 4, 297BC), Scholion in DN 4, 28, in: PG 4, 297C–300B.

150 DN 13, 4, ed. Suchla, 231, 5 (PG 3, 984A).

151 Cf. Scholion in DN 4, 19, in: PG, 273B.

152 Scholion in DN 1, 1, in: PG 4, 185B.

a partial or total deviation from truth is possible, and anyone may speak incorrectly and imperfectly.[153] The λογικόν acquires knowledge from being (ἡ τῶν ὄντων γνῶσις) thanks to the word and contemplation, as is characteristic of reason, the commentator adds. Simple and dispassionate contemplation of the divine is intrinsic to the intellectual (νοερόν).[154]

Such contemplation is achieved through enlightenment, which surpasses the capabilities of human nature. It is a living experience of Divinity; God's self-revelation in the midst of individual human existence.[155] God represents himself by holy theophanies.[156] Thus, truth is fully apprehended as it is (or rather, as it manifests itself to God-chosen minds). This grace-bestowed knowledge is contemplated by the angels and—to a lesser extent—holy men, the theologians. The minds contemplating God are gods and sons of God in the spiritual sense. True theology flows from their mouths in the form of hymnody.[157] Those who follow in their footsteps preserve their words.[158] They should also make their hymnic words discursively comprehensible. The knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) and learning (ἐκμάθησις) of the meaning of these words is a matter for those who are not fully initiated, among whom Dionysius includes himself. If theology is perceived thanks to a supra-spiritual energy, the other kind of knowledge, namely philosophy, is the result of a mental energy[159] or mental movement (νοητική κίνησις), as the Scholiast adds at this point.

Dionysius not only speaks positively about natural mental aspirations but also postulates the legitimacy of the rational pursuit of the divine. The scholiast adds that knowledge acquired through the power of natural intellect should not be underestimated but, on the contrary, transmitted to others, wherein reason possesses a natural inclination towards observing what is accessible to the human observation of God.[160]

5.6.2 The Competencies of Philosophy

In his first theological oration, Gregory the Theologian explains: "Let us not do it like wild and unruly horses, let us not throw the rider, our rational action

153 Cf. DN 13, 4, ed. Suchla, 230, 6–231, 8 (PG 3, 981C–984A).

154 Scholion in DN 9, 10, in: PG 3, 936AC; Scholion in DN 4, 4, in: PG 4, 249AB.

155 DN 2, 7, ed. Suchla, 130, 14–131, 13 (PG 3, 645AB); DN 2, 9, ed. Suchla, 133, 5–134, 5 (PG 3, 648AB).

156 DN 10, 2, ed. Suchla, 215,1 4 (PG 3, 937B).

157 DN 2, 8, ed. Suchla, 132, 5–10 (PG 3, 672BC); DN 13, 4, ed. Suchla, 230, 6–14 (PG 3, 981C); Scholion in DN 13, 4, in: PG 4, 416A.

158 Cf. DN 11, 6, ed. Suchla, 221, 13–223, 14 (PG 3, 953B–956B).

159 DN 3, 2, ed. Suchla, 140, 17–20 (PG 3, 681C).

160 DN 3, 3, ed. Suchla, 142,1–143,8 (PG 3, 684BD); Scholion in DN 3, 3, in: PG 4, 257C.

(λογισμός), out of the saddle, let us not get rid of the bridle, the appropriately guiding restraint (εὐλάβεια), let us not run too far from the post for return (νύσσα)! Let us rather philosophize within our limits!".[161] Reason is the rider, not the horse. It requires holding to the limits of human capability, defined by the composition of human nature. That horse and rider run appropriately is controlled through restraint, or rather fear or godliness, so that they do not run beyond the appointed boundary post or, conversely, shrink back unlawfully before it.

This consideration follows a bold statement by Gregory. He declares that one should always remember God. At the same time, he turns on those who—frivolously and hastily—constantly practice theologizing (τὸ θεολογεῖν). Gregory is not opposed to θεολογία or διδασκαλία, but to the excessiveness (ἀμετρία) of their practice.[162] Philosophy is what should provide the measure. Without reason and knowledge (λόγος καὶ ἐπιστήμη), the fire of eagerness (θερμότης) is uncontrollable and the navigation of faith lacks a helmsman.[163] It is precisely philosophy that enables theology, that is, the saints' gifted self-expression of God, to be encompassed within well-circumscribed boundaries, or terms (ὅροι) and expressions.[164]

5.6.2.1 *Christian Philosophy*

Of course, this is not about some kind of arbitrary philosophical theory. There is no "neutral" philosophy without preconditions at all. Every philosophical system that is well-founded and is not intended as an abstract schema reflects upon the contextual basis of its arguments.[165] The philosophy envisioned by Gregory the Theologian from the very beginning defines itself as "Christian philosophy."

The concept of "κατὰ Χριστὸν φιλοσοφία" can be traced back to Clement of Alexandria.[166] Gregory of Nyssa speaks of τῶν Χριστιανῶν φιλοσοφία.[167] Maximus the Confessor demonstratively does not adhere to any ancient philosophical school and defines his way of philosophizing as "Christian philosophy" or

161 Gregorius Nazianzenus, Oratio 27, 5, in: PG 36, 17A.
162 Ibid., 4, in: PG 36, 16BC.
163 Oratio 32, 5, in: PG 36, 180B.
164 Oratio 25, 8, in: PG 35, 1209AB.
165 Cf. A. Speer, *Fragile Konvergenz. 3 Essays zu Fragen metaphysischen Denkens*, Köln 2010, 11–32.
166 Clemens Alexandrinus, Stromateis, VI, 8, 67, in: *Clementis Alexandrini Opera*, vol. III, ed. W. Dindorf, Oxford 1869, 177,16.
167 Gregorius Nyssenus, De vita sancti Gregorii Thaumaturgi, in: PG 46, 905C.

"philosophy according to Christians" (κατὰ Χριστιανοὺς φιλοσοφία).[168] In his formulation, the concept remains valid for the entire tradition. The main positions of Christian doctrine form the axiomatic basis of Christian philosophy. Theology proper and church doctrine influence Christian philosophy. It is not only a matter of reformulating or newly formulating concepts and doctrines, but also of shaping fundamental structural elements.

5.6.2.2 *The οἰκονομία as a Sphere of Activity of Philosophy*

Theology *par excellence* differs from economy (οἰκονομία). It encompasses creation, providence, incarnation, redemption and all related matters.[169] The question arises as to which subjects one can philosophize about and how far one should go.[170]

By virtue of the natural human cognitive faculty, God is recognizable only through the logos of his economy (λόγος οἰκονομίας), through the preservation (συντήρησις) of creation, through divine power (ἐξουσία) and activities (ἐνέργειαι).[171] Insight into "invisible and heavenly natures"[172] is possible only after the exploration of the earth and the air and everything possibly connected with them, that is, of material creation.

"Economy" denotes God's manifestations within the created being with which man, or humanity, has historical experience. They can be grasped by natural human reason through mediated knowledge. It is the level of the knowledge of God that is attainable when face to face with the absolute impassability of the boundary between God and humanity.[173] Therefore, as worthy and genuine subjects for philosophizing the world or worlds, Gregory the Theologian recommends matter, the soul (in the sphere of anthropology, he emphasizes self-knowledge),[174] the good and evil noetic beings, resurrection, judgment, retribution, the sufferings of Christ, through which he aims to describe the scope of the boundary of the economy. In these things, Gregory notes, success is not without benefit, but failure is without danger. As far as God himself is

168 Maximus Confessor, Mystagogia, 5, in: PG 91, 673B.

169 Cf. Photius, Amphilochiae, 1, 14–15; 181, in: PG 101, 64C–68A; 892A.

170 Gregorius Nazianzenus, Oratio 27, 3, in: PG 36, 16A.

171 Gregorius Nazianzenus, Oratio 29, 18, in: PG 36, 97C; Oratio 30, 11, in: PG 36, 117B; Oratio 30, 19, in: PG 36, 128B; Oratio 29, 16, in: PG 36, 96A.

172 Gregorius Nazianzenus, Oratio 28, 31, in: PG 36, 72A.

173 Cf. T. Alexopoulos, Der Zugang zum Unzugänglichen und die radikale Begrenztheit eines Analogieschlusses von der Oikonomia auf die Theologia beim Hl. Gregor von Nyssa, in: *Gregory of Nyssa: In Cantucum Canticorum*, eds. G. Maspero, M. Brugarolas, I. Vigorelli, Leiden–Boston 2018, 379–389.

174 Gregorius Nazianzenus, Oratio 32, 27, in: PG 36, 204D–205C.

concerned, he says, we will perhaps come closer a little later, perhaps more perfectly, in Christ Jesus himself.[175]

Symeon the New Theologian expresses himself in a similar way. Neither divine beauty nor divine fire, he resolutely emphasizes, can be related or interpreted. One cannot recognize them unless one achieves them through experience.[176] In contrast, he recommends the sky, the sun, the stars, the earth, and death as subjects for philosophy also beneficial after death. Human self-knowledge and everything related to humanity are particularly valuable in this context. Thus, the unattainable wisdom of God is recognized through the magnificence and beauty of creation.[177]

The economy (οἰκονομία) in its full spectrum is the active circle of philosophy. While the theological existential experience, which cannot be discursively expressed, is basically outside of time and history, the entire economy extends into time and is inconceivable without temporality because it encompasses sacred and worldly history. Temporality and historicity are fundamental elements of philosophy in general, from which the *differentia specifica* of philosophy arises.[178]

5.6.2.3 *Apophatic and Cataphatic Theology*

The opinion expressed during the 20th century that the highest level of Byzantine theology is apophatic theology is not correct. With very few exceptions (e.g. Barlaam of Calabria), Byzantine thinkers argue that negative theology is a well-suited method for understanding God through discourse, which stands on an equal footing with cataphatic, positive theology.

Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, whose work *On Mystical Theology* is authoritative on this question, explains that the essence of God and the intra-Trinitarian life are inaccessible to reason and the intellect of man.[179] Neither affirmations nor negations are applicable to them.[180] What can be expressed

175 Gregorius Nazianzenus, Oratio 27, 9–10, in: PG 36, 24A–25A.

176 Simeon Novus Theologus, Hymni, 24, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Hymnes 16–40*, ed. J. Koder (Sources chrétiennes 174), Paris 1971, 238, 155–164.

177 Ibid., 33, ed. Koder, 158, 371–160, 397.

178 Cf. G. Kapriev, Zeitlichkeit und Geschichtlichkeit als Grundelemente der byzantinschen Philosophie, in: *Die Geschichtlichkeit des philosophischen Denkens*, eds. G. Kapriev, G. Mensching, Sofia 2004, 58–71.

179 De divinis nominibus, 2, 3 und 7, 3, in: *Corpus Dionysiacum I*, ed. B.R. Suchla, Berlin–New York 1990 (ed. Suchla), 131, 5–7; 197, 19 (PG 3, 645A; 869C).

180 De mystica theologia, 5, in: *Corpus Dionysiacum II*, eds. G. Heil, A.M. Ritter, Berlin–New York 1991 (ed. Heil/Ritter), 150, 4–5 (PG 3, 1048AB).

concerns the being-creating emergence from the thearchy into all being.[181] Thus, the names of God arise with respect to the created being.[182] Cataphatic and apophatic belong to the same realm of knowledge. Indeed, Dionysius emphasizes the advantage of negative theology because it takes the soul away from that which is related to it.[183] Nevertheless, it remains in the realm of our natural insight.

The sublime vision of Moses, who, not having truly seen God himself, knows the "place where God is,"[184] transcends all affirmation and negation. Detached from everything that can be seen and thought, he did not see nothing in the darkness. This contemplation is an experience from the divine that perceives beyond human cognitive faculties the mystery of divine existence.[185] This constitutes mystical theology *par excellence*.[186]

5.6.2.4 *Philosophy and Theological Discourse*

Gregory the Theologian explains philosophy as providing the measure for theologizing. It must safeguard theological teaching from excess.[187] The problem, with regard to theology *par excellence*, is how one reaches a state to adequately articulate it. Its solution, Gregory postulates, is a matter of philosophy.[188] Only from this perspective does the long list of genuinely theological topics (intratrinitarian conditions, the characteristics of hypostases, divine eternity, etc.) become comprehensible, which the philosopher must then reasonably clarify to rational beings through the power of human discourse.[189]

"It is not everyone's task, my dear ones, to philosophize about God (τὸ περὶ θεοῦ φιλοσοφεῖν)." With this sentence the real exposition in Oration 27 begins. Gregory continues: "The thing is not so cheap and not for people who crawl on the earth. And I add: One cannot philosophize about God at any time,

181 De divinis nominibus, 2, 11, ed. Suchla, 135, 13–14; 137, 8–10 (PG 3, 649B; 652A).

182 De mystica theologia, 1, 2, ed. Heil/Ritter, 143, 5–7 (PG 3, 1000B).

183 De mystica theologia, 2, ed. Heil/Ritter, 145, 7–8 (PG 3, 1025B); De divinis nominibus, 13, 3, ed. Suchla, 230, 1–5 (PG 3, 981B).

184 De mystica theologia, 1, 3, ed. Heil/Ritter, 144, 4–5 (PG 3, 1000D).

185 Gregorius Palamas, Triades, 1, 3, 18; 2, 3, 26; 2, 3, 31, in: *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα*, τ. 1, επιμ. Π. Χρήστου, Θεσσαλονίκη 1962 (ed. Christou I), 428, 26–429, 1, 560, 24–561, 2; 566, 16–17.

186 Cf. G. Kapriev, Die antiapophatische Deutung des Dionysius bei Gregorios Palamas, in: *Die Dionysius-Rezeption im Mittelalter* (Rencontres de philosophie médiévale 9), eds. T. Boiadjiev, G. Kapriev, A. Speer, Turnhout, 2000, 123–155.

187 Gregorius Nazianzenus, Oratio 27, 4, in: PG 36, 16C.

188 Oratio 25, 8, in: PG 35, 1209AB.

189 Ibid., 15, in: PG 35, 1220B–1224A.

and not before everyone and in relation to everything, but rather there is a certain time for it, and certain listeners, and certain topics. It is not a matter for everyone, because it is a matter for people who have proven themselves and have already covered a good distance in contemplation (θεωρία), and who have already purified their soul and body."[190]

Philosophers are not saints and rely on natural human reason, but they are supposed to be on the path of theory and purification. In other words, in order to be able to philosophize competently on theological issues, they must have as their basis Christian doctrine and theological experience. Analogous to the four Gospels and the four basic virtues, Maximus the Confessor defines the constitution of human knowledge through four basic elements (στοιχεία), which act in an unmerged unity and unseparated difference, namely faith, practical philosophy, natural philosophy and theological philosophy.[191]

Michael Psellus's position, in fact, is placed at the same level—the level of Christian philosophy. The first chapter of his *De omnifaria doctrina* is entitled Περὶ πίστεως—"On faith." However, it does not discuss faith itself. Psellus explains the deity (conceived as a principle, a form, nature, essence and power), the divine persons and intertrinitarian relations according to the symbol of faith interpreted in the Eastern Church's sense.[192] According to Psellus, theology, understood as speculative theology in the sense defined by Photius, is essentially part of philosophy, because both philosophy and speculative theology deal with analysis.[193] In his work, the conviction that God as such is not to be understood is expressed several times. From this point of view, for Psellus, faith assumes a fundamental role in any theoretical activity. As the connecting link between divine good and reason, it is the fundamental human competence for alignment with good, setting the direction for everything else. Reason, which can make mistakes, must always be connected with faith in order to have a chance of seeing what is right.[194]

Gregory Palamas expresses a similar opinion about the importance of philosophy: There is also foolish philosophy which diverges from the knowledge

190 Oratio 27, 3, in: PG 36, 13CD.

191 Maximus Confessor, Ambigua ad Ioannem, 21, in: PG 91, 1245D–1248A.

192 *Michael Psellus. De omnifaria doctrina. Critical Text and Introduction,* ed. L.G. Westerink, Utrecht 1948, 17, 1–12. (ed. Westerink). Cf. G. Kapriev, Neugier und Wissbegier. Der Fall Byzanz, in: *Curiositas* (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 42), eds. A. Speer, R.M. Schneider, Berlin–Boston 2022, 10–11.

193 F. Lauritzen, Psello discepolo di Stetato, in: *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 2 (2008), 715.

194 D. Walter, *Michael Psellus: Christliche Philosophie in Byzanz*, Berlin–Boston 2018, 167–169 and 186–187.

of God. This happens whenever philosophy surrenders to the illusion of absolute authority. Philosophy must diminish its claims to be able to provide secure knowledge of the divine on its own. But when it reaches its natural goal, it is in harmony with the wisdom of the Holy Spirit.[195]

The central point is formulated by Maximus the Confessor. He does not question that human knowledge of God apprehends God solely through his orientation toward creation. Crucial for him, however, is the fact that the Son remains in theological unity with the Father: συνθεολογεῖται ὁ Υἱὸς τῷ Πατρί. Otherwise they would have to differentiate themselves according to his principle-λόγος and thus according to essence and energy. The incarnated Logos teaches us theology.[196] Theology and economy are indivisibly linked in the hypostasis of the Son. This is the foundation of Maximus's entire conceptual system, which has been valid as a paradigm since the 9th century.

Philoteus Kokkinos offers a detailed description of the relationship between theological discourse and a philosophical approach in his two discourses against Acindynus and the Acindynists.[197] He presents a well-thought-out procedure for philosophizing when its theme encompasses dimensions of οἰκονομία that are directly related to the realm of theology itself.

A firm premise of Kokkinos's course of thought is the circumstance that the Divine is completely incomprehensible by its nature, not only to human beings, but also to the highest noetic natures.[198] Attempts to comprehend it through the investigative powers of the soul (διὰ τῶτν ἐρευνητικῶς τῆς ψυχῆς δυνάμεως), by reasoning and thought and appropriate syllogisms (συλλογίζεσται) fail, because it stands aloof from any such approach.[199] Whoever frees themselves from all sensual and intellectual perspectives comes into contact with that which is beyond all essence and knowledge, as has been shown to us

195 Gregorius Palamas, Triades I, 1, 12; II, 1, 23, ed. Christou I, 374, 24–375, 1; 485, 32–486, 10. Cf. G. Kapriev, Es sind zwei Augen der Seele. Vernunft und Offenbarung gemäß der Hesychasten des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts, in: *Vernunft und Offenbarung*, eds. G. Kapriev, G. Mensching, Sofia 2006, 57–69.

196 Maximus Confessor, Disputatio cum Pyrrho, in: PG 91, 348C–349B.

197 Philotheus Kokkinos, Περὶ τοῦ ἐν τῷ Θαβωρίῳ δεσποτικοῦ φωτὸς καὶ περὶ θείας ἐνεργείας πρὸς τοὺς ἀντιλέγοντας ἀπολογήτας; Περὶ θεότητος καὶ θείου φωτὸς καὶ πνευματικῶν ὁράσεων καὶ τῆς ἱερᾶς τῶντελείων προσευχῆς πρὸς τοὺς αὐτοὺς ἀπολογήτας [On the Divine Light of Tabor and the Divine Energy: A Response to the Opponents; On Divinity, Divine Light, Spiritual Visions, and the Sacred Prayer of the Perfect: A Response to the Opponents], in: Philotheus Kokkinos, *De Domini luce. Editio princeps* (Bibliotheca christiana 18), ed. P. Yaneva, Sofia 2011 (ed. Yaneva).

198 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 48, 3–5.

199 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 136, 1–4; Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 39, 20–23.

many times by the God-testifying heralds (οἱ θεηγόροι φθάσαντες).[200] The spirit of truth will lead its followers to the whole truth of the correct dogmas through the words of the theologians through whom the Spirit has spoken.[201]

We do not in any way comprehend the divine essence itself, but only that which stands around the essence (τὰ περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν).[202] While the divine essence remains inaccessible, we learn to know God through his energies, which descend upon us.[203] This surpassing glory of God, the grace of the good Spirit, poured into the hearts of the saints, achieves true knowledge or knowing of God.[204] Those who participate in this mystery and those who experience it teach us about it according to the word of the Lord. They can do it precisely because it concerns economy (οἰκονομία), a truly wonderful economy.[205]

Precisely just because it is a matter of economy and not of theology *par excellence*, the knowledge of the divine energies acting *ad extra* and the attainment of such knowledge is accessible not only to those who have acquired grace and divinization, but also to those who lack experience of this blessed pathos (τοῦ μακαρίου πάθους ἀπείρατοι), among whom Philotheus includes himself.[206]

Those who have not had mystical experience are initiated rather dimly and moderately (λίαν ἀμυδρῶς καὶ μετρίως), because they still have not completely freed themselves from inner chaos and division. Empowered by a faith capable of anything and protected by the philanthropy of the mystery, however, they are obligated to progress toward this higher knowledge. It is difficult and dangerous to be short-sighted with regard to noetic vision, and to push away the knowledge that is appropriate to our power. Such behavior is evidence of suffering from unbelief, which is the mother of ignorance and the exponent of all evils.[207] We will climb with Moses on the holy mountain for a time, explains Philotheus, although we will not see intelligibly what is longed for, not yet being able to recognize it, but will first philosophize, covered by the rock, like those who have seen God from behind (τὰ ὀπίσω μου—Exodus, 33, 23).[208]

Kokkinos is well aware that his approach is a philosophical one because, in the case of the knowledge of divine energies, it is a matter of understand-

200 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 136, 10–16.
201 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 47, 25–48, 2.
202 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 49, 20–21.
203 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 50, 1–5.
204 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 53, 21–24.
205 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 35, 30–36, 3.
206 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 120, 5.
207 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 122, 20–123, 2.
208 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 142, 10–14.

ing the divine economy, which is to be understood and interpreted by reason and intellect. At the same time, with regard to those problems, he notes that it is not about arbitrary philosophizing. Philosophizing and talking about such subjects, he insists, following Gregory the Theologian, are not a task for casual people and are not a task for everyone. Nor is it directed at casual people and is not to be carried out in all possible situations. It is a matter for spiritual people and is directed toward spiritual people.[209] The "philosopher of the church" (τῆς ἐκκλησίας φιλόσοφος) John Damascene is put forward as an example.[210]

The model is the best way theologians philosophize (τοῖς θεολόγοις φιλοσοφηθὲν ἄριστα).[211] Correct thinkers (οἱ φρονοῦντες ὀρθῶς) follow divine power and providence and the God-inspired fathers, Kokkinos stresses.[212] Based on this, he proclaims a struggle (μαχόμενον) against those who compromise the truth and try to distract those who advocate it.[213] He rebukes those "lame in regard to theological thought" because they demonstrate a lack of diligence and consistent effort. They have not co-philosophized with people who are more spiritual than they are and have not philosophized in order to discover the truth themselves (συμφιλοσοφεῖν τε καὶ φιλοσοφεῖν τὲν τῆς ἀληθείας εὕρεσιν).[214]

The assumption that the anthropocentric critics of Palamites, especially Byzantine Thomists, have taken a completely different position does not find sufficient justification. It is, of course, reasonable to expect that they would emphasize the competences of natural human reason more explicitly. The understanding of Demetrius Cydones should be considered an exemplary case. He held high offices of state under the emperors John Kantakouzenos and John V from the mid-40s of the 14th century. For almost four decades, he determined the Empire's domestic and foreign policy. Through his translation of Thomas Aquinas' *Summa contra gentiles*, completed in December 1354, as well as through his other translations of the writings of Thomas and other Latin authors, and through his own texts, he became the founder of Byzantine Thomism, exerting influence on Byzantine culture for more than 100 years.

Demetrius accords higher value to philosophy than to other literary genres, insofar as it is associated with the pursuit of truth. Truth, which ultimately means God, is the most desirable thing, he postulates. Neglecting the natural

209 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 115, 9–15.
210 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 31, 10.
211 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 94, 10–11.
212 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 99, 4–5.
213 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 141, 3–6.
214 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 103, 10–14.

desire for truth downgrades man to being an unreasoning animal. The only absolutely secure path to truth is Holy Scripture since one's own reason can only be partially successful in attaining truth in this life. Despite all obstacles on the path to truth, there are certain pure natural ideas in the soul, known to the same extent by all and implanted by God. These ideas, originating in God himself, form a solid foundation for attaining God through discursive thinking and are compatible with revelation and church dogma. The church fathers fully realized this correlation in their lives and works. Open-mindedness and critical thinking are the most important prerequisites for embarking on this path. Discursive thinking permeates every sphere of our life, including theology. In this life, however, man cannot grasp the divine essence, but recognizes only indirectly the existence of God and His action in creation. Despite these limitations, Cydones is convinced that the activity of reason is not only possible but also indispensable when constructing syllogisms on any subject. The ability to construct proofs and syllogisms grants man superiority over other living beings and constitutes his dignity (ὑπεροχή). Demetrius applied his philosophical approach mainly to religious questions.

God, in his definition, is pure act (ἐνέργεια καθαρά) and therefore it is perfectly unacceptable to introduce any division into him, other than conceptual distinctions made for the purpose of human knowledge. His conviction remains unchanged, however, that human discursive thinking (διάνοια) is given by God, whereby human knowledge has a rational character by the will of God and is endowed with the ability to rise from the contingent to first principles and to seek and discover God himself. Therefore, the clarification and imposition of the scholastic method, defined by him as the best method for approaching the truth, becomes a philosophical leitmotif of his work.

By the will of the Creator, true human knowledge is positioned in the middle between purely spiritual and sensory knowledge. The syllogism, this most beautiful and necessary gift of God, is able to lead us to God himself, insofar as access to the inaccessible God becomes possible through analogies with the created world. In the human soul, Demetrius insists, natural and supernatural powers are at work, which, based of analogous images, generate in the reason the idea of God. Therefore, reason should not be excluded from the other faculties of the soul at all stages in the knowledge of God.

Demetrius, who consistently justifies the legitimate position of syllogisms in theology, rejects the possibility of proving religious truths about the Trinity and the Incarnation based on creaturely principles. Otherwise, he opposes Barlaam's generalizing thesis and asserts that apodictic syllogisms about Divinity are possible. He insists that, even with regard to Trinitarian relations, it is legitimate to deduce apodictic proofs because the middle term in the syllogism does

not always have to follow from a natural cause for the known, so it can be taken from the order of causes intelligible to us.

The fact that God neither belongs to a genus nor can be subordinated to anything prior and higher (πρότερον) does not pose obstacles to apodictic proof, Demetrius argues. Introducing the doctrine of transcendentals, he says that many concepts are thought of by us as being in a sense broader than God alone: being (τὸ ὄν), the one (τὸ ἕν), the good (τὸ ἀγαθόν), the true (τὸ ἀληθές), which are really contained in God, but cannot be exchanged for him in our thinking. Nevertheless, we can make statements about them that necessarily apply to God. Therefore, the use of transcendentals as πρότερα in proof is as legitimate as the use of principles of identity or contradiction. Such a proof may be called theological since contingent concepts are detached from their contingent modes of existence. But the dialectical proof is also given to us as a gift from God for the exploration and discovery of the first truth. Demetrius connects this to his conviction that God cannot have wished for a collision between revelation and nature. It is precisely the harmony between reason and faith which, for Cydones, is an argument for using dialectical syllogism in theological discussion if it starts from theological principles. The συμφονία of reason and faith is the foundation of Demetrius Cydones' philosophical thinking.[215]

The spectrum of philosophical discourse about the realm of the theological in relation to knowledgeable appropriated faith outlined remains valid for philosophical developments in the 15th century as well. The emergence of Byzantine Platonism and Byzantine Aristotelianism in the 1440s does not

215 Cf. G. Mercati, *Notizie di Procoro e Demetrio Cidone, Manuele Caleca e Teodoro Meliteniota* (*Studi e Testi* 56), Rome 1931, 62–171, 283–450; H.-G. Beck, Der Kampf um den thomistischen Theologiebegriff in Byzanz, in: *Divus Thomas*, 13 (1935), 3–22; H.-G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich*, München 1959, 733–737; S.G. Papadopulus, Thomas in Byzanz. Thomas-Rezeption und Thomas-Kritik in Byzanz zwischen 1354 und 1435, in: *Theologie und Philosophie*, 2/3 (1974), 278–282; G. Podskalsky, *Theologie und Philosophie in Byzanz*, München 1977, 197–205; F. Tinnefeld, Einleitung, in: Demetrios Cydones, *Briefe*, Bd. 1/1, Stuttgart 1981, 1–74; F. Kianka, Demetrius Cydones and Thomas Aquinas, in: *Byzantion*, 52 (1982), 264–286; L. Benakis, *Texts and Studies on Byzantine Philosophy*, Athens 2002, 187–197, 525–530, 634–640; Γ. Ἀ. Δημητρακόπουλος, Πλήθων καὶ Θωμᾶς Ἀκυινάτης, Ἀθήνα 2004, 29–31; G. Kapriev, Kydones, Demetrios, in: *Thomisten-Lexikon*, eds. D. Berger, J. Vijgen, Bonn 2006, 346–354; J. Ryder, *The Career and Writings of Demetrius Kydones: A Study of Fourteenth-Century Byzantine Politics, Religion and Society*, Leiden–Boston 2010; J. Demetracopoulos, Demetrios Kydones, in: *Byzanz. Judentum* (*Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg, Die Philosophie des Mittelalters, Bd. 1), eds. A. Brungs, G. Kapriev, W. Mudroch, Basel 2019, 158–164.

change the picture. The late Plethon, usually claimed as a counterexample, if the fragments known to us represent him adequately, put the deities of Hellenic polytheism, stylized in its own way,[216] in place of the Christian Deity. In principle, his approach remains analogous to that of other Byzantine philosophers. Faith is generally accepted as a mandatory element of Christian philosophizing. By this is meant faith formulated by the dogmas and authoritative interpretations which is the axiomatic basis of such philosophizing. Within this framework, the manifold programs, the many faces of Byzantine philosophy[217] manifest themselves.

5.6.2.5 *Philosophy and Wisdom. The Paradigm of Maximus the Confessor*

The questions relating to the divine economy, among which the doctrine of the Incarnation of the Logos holds a primary place, are classified by Maximus the Confessor within the sphere of a kind of knowledge called "philosophy." This philosophy, formed κατὰ λόγον καὶ θεορίαν (according to reason and contemplation),[218] has a sufficiently broad scope for its own competencies. Maximus, who otherwise pays attention to "external" philosophy and incorporates Aristotelian logic in systematizing dogmas,[219] distances himself from Hellenic metaphysical positions.[220]

Even its conceptual basis is inherited, not from the Hellenic philosophers, but from its transformation by the church fathers. His position on Hellenic philosophy in a passage in his theological and polemical writings is exemplary.[221] Here, he compares several definitions (namely of the concepts "nature," "essence," "individual," and "hypostasis") as found among the "philosophers" and as outlined by the "fathers". Rhetorically, this passage is arranged as a polemical opposition. In terms of content, however, this is not entirely so. The definitions originating in the tradition of the fathers to which Maximus gives preference do not stand in direct contradiction to the "philosophical" ones. (Nevertheless, it must be noted that the differences in "nature" and "essence" are significantly

216 Cf. T. Boiadjiev, Georgios Gemistos Plethon, in: *Byzanz. Judentum* (*Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg, Die Philosophie des Mittelalters, Bd. 1), eds. A. Brungs, G. Kapriev, W. Mudroch, Basel 2019, 206–207.

217 K. Ierodiakonou, Byzantine Philosophy Revisited (a decade after), in: *The Many Faces of Byzantine Philosophy*, eds. B. Bydén, K. Ierodiakonou, Athens 2012, 1–21.

218 Maximus Confessor, Ambigua ad Ioannem, 10, in: PG 91, 1113BC.

219 Cf. B. Tatakis, *La philosophie byzantine*, Paris 1949, 87.

220 E. v. Ivanka, Der philosophische Ertrag der Auseinandersetzung Maximos des Bekenners mit dem Origenismus, in: *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen byzantinischen Gesellschaft*, 7 (1958), 23–50, here 26.

221 Maximus Confessor, Opuscula theologica et polemica, 26, in PG 91, 276AB.

greater than in the other terms.) They do not so much replace the "philosophical" definitions as change the direction of mental focus.

The subject of natural human knowledge constituted in this way is the philosophizing intellect (φιλοσοφώτατος νοῦς).[222] It seeks truth and wisdom and, along with this, has in the truth belonging to wisdom a guarantor for the correctness of its orientation. No other wisdom than the divine can be the starting point of the love for wisdom, which understands itself as love for God (φιλοθεία).[223]

From here arises the obvious point that a philosophy, understanding itself as autarchic, that is, "without preconditions," can never achieve perfect knowledge and thus can never be "true philosophy." Maximus speaks devastatingly against those who believe in logical procedures (ταῖς λογικαῖς πιστεύων ἐφόδοις)[224] with their superstition and vain faith in the action of a contingent power. Divine wisdom stands above all contingent truths. Only it can be the convergent point of true philosophy.

5.6.2.5.1 The Two Types of Philosophy

Maximus talks about two types of philosophy. In one case, it refers to the "divine philosophy" of the saints, which encompasses more dimensions than scientifically profiled philosophy. This philosophy also includes contemplation, noetic wisdom, and practice. It also ennobles—and indeed necessarily (ἐξ ἀνάγκης)—the nature of the body by means of the energies of the right intellect and reason. The philosophy of the saints is identical with their wisdom. Their bearers are seen as representatives of the βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ (the kingdom of God).[225] The phrase "divine philosophy" (θεία φιλοσοφία) or "complete philosophy" (πληρεστάτη φιλοσοφία) denotes experiencing the divine life itself and is knowledge through divine existential actions, which are supernatural even for the intellect-νοῦς. This type of philosophy is the basis and purpose of discursive Christian philosophy.

In the other case, philosophy is understood as a scientific discipline, which is without exception a matter of natural reason. This philosophy searches for uniform truth through divisional methods (διαιρετικοὶ μεθόδοι).[226] In this type of philosophy continual errors and mistakes are to be expected. Philosophiz-

222 Maximus Confessor, Epistulae, 6, in: PG 91, 429C.
223 Maximus Confessor, Ambigua ad Ioannem, 37, in: PG 91, 1296B.
224 Ibid., 16, in: PG 91, 1228A.
225 Ibid., 50, in: PG 91, 1368AB.
226 Maximus Confessor, Mystagogia, 5, in: PG 91, 681B.

ing is carried out through one's own powers of thought. Precisely this type of philosophizing is generally meant by "philosophy."

5.6.2.5.2 Wisdom

By "wisdom" (σοφία), Maximus primarily denotes divine wisdom directed towards creatures. It is bestowed upon blessed contemplatives according to the perceptual capacity of each individual. The wise person possesses wisdom as a steadfast internal state (ἕξις). This type of knowledge is defined as sensuality (αἴσθησις), but a supra-sensory sensuality, providing immediate knowledge through simple intuition (κατὰ ἁπλῆν προσβολήν).[227] The beauty of wisdom is γνῶσις ἔμπρακτος and πρᾶξις ἔνσοφος—practical knowledge and practice inherited through wisdom—in which the connection between knowledge and practice, senses and reason dwell in perfect unity actuated by the Holy Spirit. The indivisible unity of wise knowledge and practice produces the knowledge peculiar to the wise man, which Maximus denotes as "εἴδησις"[228]—knowledge from personal experience and amidst experience.

In the present state of humanity, Maximus argues, the wisdom that one can attain is inevitably linked to economy. In this mode of human nature's existence, the *nous* is called "wisdom" δυνάμει. This potentiality is actualized only under certain circumstances.[229] However, it is obvious that wisdom, and a much more extensive one at that, must also be an element of other modes of existence—both before the fall of man and in the kingdom of God. The general rule is that the νοῦς is called and *is* wisdom if it irrevocably retains all its movements towards God.[230]

5.6.2.5.3 Wisdom and Philosophy

As previously mentioned, Maximus considers the knowledge of phenomena, which begins with sensuality and is attained through the work of reason, in which the arts and sciences also have their origin, as a compensatory capacity. It should provide the possibility of recovering—albeit to a limited extent—the knowledge of God and life in proximity to God lost after the fall.[231]

In this context, Maximus speaks not only of the difference but also of the connection between wisdom and philosophy, linking them with certainty.

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227 Ibid.

228 Maximus Confessor, Ambigua ad Thomam, praefatio, in: PG 91, 1032AB.

229 Maximus Confessor, Mystagogia, 5, in: PG 91, 676C.

230 Ibid., in: PG 91, 672D.

231 Maximus Confessor, Ambigua ad Ioannem, 45, in: PG 91, 1353C–1356A.

When observing creation from the perspective of διαφορά, through which the whole is divided into two parts, namely heaven and what is contained in heaven, he asserts that there are generally two modes of knowing: wisdom and philosophy (σοφία καὶ φιλοσοφία). Wisdom contains and receives all godly and pious ways of knowing, as well as the mystical and natural principles (λόγοι) that encompass everything. Philosophy, on the other hand, includes the λόγοι of what is determined as ἔθος, γνώμη, πρᾶξις and θεωρία, ἀρετή and γνῶσις, transitioning to wisdom as its cause in a mutually binding relationship (οἰκειότης σχετική).[232]

The position of philosophy in the present mode of human existence and its relationship with wisdom are to be understood from this perspective. Wisdom is both the cause of the emergence of philosophy and its goal. It is at the root of its genesis and motivates it as a final cause. The goal of philosophy is to merge with wisdom, to transform into wisdom. Its relative autonomy arises precisely from the need for the knowledge of God to be attained in this mode of human existence through creation. This kind of knowledge of God occurs through the natural λόγοι, whose knowledge by virtue of reason is the domain of philosophy. The necessary presence of philosophy in this mode of existence distinguishes it from all intellectual and practical arts, whose goal is to satisfy needs arising from unfavorable external conditions.[233]

5.7 *Definitions of Philosophy*

5.7.1 John Damascene

John Damascene refrains from attempts to define theology. For him too, "theology" usually stands in opposition to "economy" and denotes God in the perspective of the inner life of the Trinity. Theological knowledge is attained solely through faith. Faith is the foundation of reason in all its movements. At the same time, Damascene does not see any contradictory opposition between faith and reason. This circumstance allows him to maintain a fundamentally rationalistic tone.[234] He asserts that there is nothing more precious than knowledge because it is the light of rational souls, while its absence is a dimming of reason.[235] Pretentious ignorance is considered a fault that is difficult to forgive.[236] From this perspective, he also formulates the place of philosophy.

232 Ibid., 10, in: PG 91, 672D.

233 Cf. G. Kapriev, Weisheit und Philosophie in der Lehre des Maximus Confessor, in: *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiévales*, 85/1 (2018), 207–216.

234 G. Podskalsky, *Theologie und Philosophie*, München 1977, 105.

235 Johannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 1, in: *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, Bd. 1, ed. B. Kotter, Berlin 1969 (ed. Kotter 1), 53, 2–3 (PG 94, 529A).

236 Johannes Damascenus, Fons scientiae, praefatio, in: ed. Kotter 1, 52, 30–32 (PG 94, 524A).

As already mentioned, true philosophy is defined in the novel *Barlaam and Joasaph* as the correct Christian way of life.[237] However, in his theoretical writings, Damascene defines its basic tasks as the rational formulation of the truths of Christian faith, its doctrinal systematization, and the refutation of false γνῶσις. For this reason, he insists that the holy fathers are both disciples and teachers of truth and true philosophy.[238] He declares himself a defender of philosophy, its importance and achievements.

John Damascene insists that there is one single and unified philosophy. The philosophical corpus is traditionally divided into practical and theoretical philosophy. Practical philosophy turns to the virtues and includes ethics, economics and politics. Theoretical philosophy encompasses physiology (knowledge of the material), mathematics (knowledge of number, i.e. the intermediary between the material and the immaterial) and theologizing, which deals with the incorporeal and the immaterial: primarily God, the truly immaterial, then the angels and souls.[239]

Damascene mentions six definitions of philosophy: 1) It is knowledge about being (γνῶσις τῶν ὄντων) as such, i.e. knowledge about the nature of being (τῆς τῶν ὄντων φύσεως); 2) It is knowledge about divine and human things, i.e. about the visible and invisible; 3) Philosophy is thinking about death; 4) It is assimilation to God; 5) It is the art (τέχνη) of arts and the knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) of knowledge because it is the principle of all arts; 6) Philosophy is love of wisdom (φιλία σοφίας); God is true wisdom; love of God is thus true philosophy (ἀληθής φιλοσοφία).[240]

With these definitions, Damascene attempts to encompass the entire spectrum of contemporary conceptions of theoretical philosophy: from the specialized Aristotelian definition of first philosophy to the Platonic, Stoic, and Neoplatonic formulations. The definitions and their sequence coincide with those of the Neoplatonist David (6th century). While for David and the Hellenic philosophers, the last definition only implies a reasonable ascent to the highest principle, for Damascene, it is interpreted in a completely Christian sense, which becomes the reason for a new interpretation of all other definitions. His *Dialectic* is a systematic collection of basic metaphysical and logical concepts in the context of their use in Christian dogmatics. The source of the concep-

237 *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, Bd. 6/2, ed. R. Volk, Berlin–New York 2006, 148, 53–150, 86 (PG 96, 992D–993D).

238 Johannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 47, in: ed. Kotter 1, 112, 10–11 (PG 94, 620D).

239 Johannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 3, in: ed. Kotter 1, 56, 28–57, 49 (PG 94, 533B–536B).

240 Johannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 3, in: ed. Kotter 1, 56, 2–23 (PG 94, 533BC). Cf. Dialectica, 67, in: ed. Kotter 1, 136, 2–137, 15 (PG 94, 669B–672B).

tual and definitional foundation of Damascene is the writings of Aristotle and Porphyrius. Other Neoplatonic influences, mainly mediated by the school of Ammonius Hermiae, are also noticeable. The "Aristotelianism" of Damascene has a formal and not a content-related character. Both the philosophical ideas of Damascene and the nature of his formulating and reformulating concepts in his work owe themselves to the patristic tradition. This circumstance allows him to depart from all Hellenic school traditions and outline a new philosophical program. Such a philosophy ought to be described as the entire contents of the *Fountain of Knowledge*. Thanks to Damascene's work, Christian thought is already able, not only to make sovereign use of certain philosophical concepts and positions, but also to "adopt" the entire philosophical cosmos, transforming it into the context of its own intellectual resources[241]

5.7.2 Michael Psellus

Psellus defines philosophy as scientific knowledge about being (τῶν ὄντων ἐπιστήμη). The subject of philosophy encompasses all existing beings, the essence of things and the principles and causes of the world. Psellus considers philosophy to be the foundation to all sciences and even to theology. He insists that the human intellect (νοῦς) is capable of acquiring truth both from reason and revelation, in such a way that logical reasoning about truth does not conflict with Christian teaching.

In his work *Explanation of the Meanings of Philosophy*, Psellus states, in connection with the definition of philosophy, that it has its own name and existence, and therefore its own subject and purpose, surpassing all arts and knowledge because it is their mother. He promises to present six definitions (ὁρισμοί) of philosophy, two according to subject, two according to purpose, one according to excellence (ὑπεροχή), and one according to etymology. After this statement, he repeats the six definitions presented by Damascene.

They are as follows: 1) "Philosophy is knowledge of being as being (γνῶσις τῶν ὄντων ὄντα)"; 2) It is "knowledge of divine and human things (γνῶσις θείων

241 Cf. B. Studer, *Die theologische Arbeitsweise des Johannes von Damaskus*, Ettal 1956, 31, 103–118, 124; G. Richter, *Die Dialektik des Johannes von Damaskos*, Ettal 1964, 8–9, 235, 270–271; И. Христов, „Диалектика" от Йоан Дамаскин в идейния свят на старата българска литература, в: *Хуманизъм. Култура. Религия*, съст. И. Христов, София 1997 [I. Christov, The 'Dialectic' of John Damascene in the Ideational World of Early Bulgarian Literature, in: *Humanism, Culture, Religion*, ed. I. Christov, Sofia 1997—Bulgarian], 199–205; A.M. Ritter, Johannes von Damaskus, in: *Die Philosophie der Kaiserzeit und der Spätantike* (Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Die Philosophie der Antike, Bd. 5), eds. C. Horn, C. Riedweg, D. Wyrwa, Basel 2018, 2288–2299.

τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων)"; 3) It is "thinking about death (μελέτη θανατου)"; 4) It is "assimilation to God according to human capacity (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν ἀνθρωπῷ)"; 5) It is "the art of arts and knowledge of knowledges (τέχνη τέχνῶν καὶ ἐπιστήμη ἐπιστημῶν)"; 6) It is "love of wisdom (φιλία σοφίας)".[242]

Unlike Damascene, Psellus attempts to interpret them. First, he makes efforts to name the ancient authors of these definitions and to construct his explanation from the perspective of their presumed intentions. He attributes the first, second, and sixth definitions to Pythagoras, the definitions relating to purpose to Plato (he finds the definition of "assimilation to God" in the *Theaetetus* and the definition of "contemplation of death" in the *Phaedo*), and Aristotle as the author of the definition relating to excellence. It should be noted that the individual definitions are interpreted entirely in a Christian sense. Psellus implants Christian positions into the conceptual archive of ancient thought. For example, he interprets "death" in the Platonic definition of philosophy as the "mortification of passions (νέκρωσις τῶν παθῶν)."

Psellus strongly emphasizes that philosophy, by dealing with both divine and human matters, does not prioritize one over the other but strives toward the Divine in order to elevate the human to perfection. According to him, the fifth definition—"τέχνη τεχνῶν καὶ ἐπιστήμη ἐπιστημῶν"—expresses the superiority of philosophy insofar as it surpasses all other sciences and arts: it is their βασιλεύς.[243] In connection with the fourth definition ("ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν ἀνθρωπῷ"), Psellus explains that the perfect philosopher is godlike (ὅμοιος ἐστι θεῷ): the three peculiarities attributed by poets to the Divine—namely, goodness, knowledge, and power—are inherent in philosophers as well. Just as the Divine preconceives everything, so the perfect philosopher cares for imperfect souls and leads them to perfection along the path of knowledge. Since the Divine knows everything, the philosopher is obliged to know the causes of everything. Both the Divine and the perfect philosopher can do anything they wish.[244] The arts and sciences—through its βασιλεύς and under its guidance—participate in this Divinity, striving to understand it by imitating it.

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242 Ἐπίλυσις εἰς τοὺς τῆς φιλοσοφίας τρόπους [Resolution of the Modes of Philosophy], in: *Michaelis Pselli philosophica minora*, v. I, ed. J.M. Duffy, Stuttgart–Leipzig 1992, 181, 110–182, 118.

243 Ibid., 184, 205–185, 217.

244 Ibid., 184, 195–204.

6 Periodization of Byzantine Philosophical Culture

The researcher who intends to design a periodization of Byzantine philosophical culture should first be aware of the relativity of this historical division. Furthermore, it should be noted that the conventional, politically motivated division of Byzantine history into early Byzantine (4th–6th century), middle Byzantine (7th–12th century), and late Byzantine (13th–15th century) periods is not particularly productive when considering the history of philosophy. In this regard, Vladimir Lossky's thesis is heuristic: the history of Byzantine philosophical-theological thought should be seen as a series of intellectual cycles, in which more or less comprehensive syntheses are formed, triggered by the reorganization of the entire tradition around questions that have become dominant at pivotal moments in each epoch.[245]

6.1 *Pre-Byzantine Authors*

Regardless of whether one describes the Christian thinkers of the 4th–6th century as pre-Byzantine or early Byzantine, one must admit that the whole Byzantine tradition is unthinkable without their contribution. As already demonstrated, these authors consciously laid the foundations of Christian philosophy. However, the function of philosophizing is mostly fulfilled in the formation of the conceptual framework of speculative theology and the development of corresponding arguments. And thus the paradigmatic philosophical discussion of fundamental topics of the Christian worldview is realized at the same time.

One of the most important activities of the authors from the 4th century was the development of Trinitarian terminology. Foremost among them are Athanasius of Alexandria, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Amphilochius of Iconium, and Evagrius Ponticus, whose work cannot be understood without the contribution made by Origen. They shape Christian formulations of primary terms such as essence (οὐσία) and nature (φύσις), individual (ἄτομον) and hypostasis (ὑπόστασις), principle of essence (λόγος τῆς οὐσίας) and way of existence (τρόπος τῆς ὑπάρξεως).

Parallel to this, decisive topics are developed in exemplary fashion. Among them was the question of the intellectual inaccessibility of the divine essence and the knowledge of God. Man is able to perceive and grasp only divine activity (ἐνέργειες). This knowledge is regarded as an endless path into the divine light, which will continue even in the Kingdom of God, because natural human cognitive ability is and remains limited. Already Athanasius explains that cre-

245 Cf. V. Lossky, *The Vision of God*, New York 1983, 153.

ation is not an act of the divine essence but of the divine will, interpreted as an essential power, by virtue of its activities. To this topic still belong complexes of questions such as time and its beginning, the form-matter relationship, divine and human freedom, as well as further positions on anthropology, along with their eschatological and soteriological perspectives. In the 4th century, through the work of Evagrius Ponticus, influenced by Origenist ideas, the practice of prayer and mystical knowledge were systematized. Evagrius formulates the three dimensions of cognitive contemplation: purifying practice (τὰ πρακτικά) and the γνῶσις, τὰ γνῶστικά, divided into two stages—the first one being the stage of natural vision (φυσική θεωρία), i.e. the vision of the principles-λόγοι of the corporeal and noetic beings, the second one being the theological level of ecstatic contemplation of God, beyond all imaginations and thoughts. The doctrine of mental prayer (νοερά προσευχή) was developed within his intellectual program; it was soon reformulated by monastic teachers such as Macarius the Egyptian, Didymus the Blind, and Diadochus of Photice as the prayer of the heart (καρδιακή προσευχή), also known as the Jesus Prayer, but acted as a systematic foundation for the psychosomatic hesychastic spiritual life in Christ.

The philosophical activity of the Christian thinkers of the 5th and 6th century is characterized by the Christological disputes and the elaboration of corresponding terminology. Cyril of Alexandria is seen as the highest pre-Chalcedonian authority with his teaching on the hypostatic unity of Christ's person. Through the work of John Philoponus, Leontius of Byzantium and his disciple, codifier and continuator Leontius of Jerusalem, terminology is further refined, not least by coining the terms "inherent in hypostasis" (ἐνυπόστατον) and "composite hypostasis" (ὑπόστασις σύνθετος). In the first decades of the 6th century the *Corpus Areopagiticum* of Dionysius Pseudo-Areopagite also appears in the public realm.

6.2 *Establishing Byzantine Philosophy*

In the 7th and 8th century the establishment and self-assertion of Byzantine philosophy took place.

The first great synthesis of Byzantine philosophy was established by Maximos Homologetes (Maximus the Confessor), who since the 30s of the 7th century took the doctrine of the two wills and energies of Christ as the main theme of his work. Maximus writes casually, but his work nevertheless testifies to a complete system of thought. In it he realizes a powerful fusion of various conceptual sources. He systematizes the critically thought-out Hellenic heritage and the achievements of Christian authors. This includes an innovative assimilation of Origenist and Evagrian teachings, integrating their significant ideas.

From the 9th century onwards, Maximus was esteemed as a preeminent philosophical authority.

With its two phases (730–787 and 815–843), the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy represents, in its theological sense, a subsequent Christological debate. Because Biblical and references by the fathers to the character of sacred images are sparse, the debates were conducted in the field of rational argument with an emphasis on their consistency. Logic formed the basis of the discussion, particularly during the second period. Not only was logical technique applied, but logical theory itself was problematized. The Hellenic legacy, primarily Aristotle's but also Plato's and Stoic philosophy, was meticulously appropriated and critically reshaped, not only from a logical perspective but also in terms of epistemology and ontology. Cognitive spaces expanded through the introduction of new, hitherto unfamiliar concepts, such as those advocated by Theodore the Studite, including different types of identity: hypostatic identity (τὸ ταὐτὸν τῆς ὑποστάσεως) and natural identity (τὸ ταὐτὸν τῆς φύσεως), despite his clear awareness that this contradicted Aristotelian doctrine. Theodore's approach was fundamentally Aristotelian, yet he distanced himself from Aristotelian paradigm at decisive junctures. The peculiarity of his category theory, digression from the Aristotelian concepts of matter and form (εἶδος), the introduction and formulation of the concept of hypostasis are a few examples that show that Theodore's reception of Aristotle has its boundaries, especially within the framework of the Church Fathers and Holy Scripture. Moreover, the authors of this period allow themselves to move away from the classical system of consistent logic in favor of para-consistent logic. The intensity and subtlety of the debates require the terminological explication of content that has so far been deployed intuitively. Among the results, the development of an ontology of the sensitively perceptible should be mentioned. During the Iconoclasm, terms that can no longer be recognized as authentically Aristotelian, Platonic or Stoic were adopted on a grand scale. The concepts of Hellenic philosophers were transmitted in variants far removed from their original sources.[246]

246 Cf. K. Parry, *Depicting the Word: Byzantine Iconophile Thought of the Eighth and Ninth Centuries*, Leiden 1996, 19–63; K. Parry, Aristotle and the Icon: The use of the *Categories* by Byzantine iconophile writers, in: *Aristotle's Categories in the Byzantine, Arabic and Latin Traditions*, eds. S. Ebbesen, J. Marenbon, P. Thom, Copenhagen 2013, 35–58; T.T. Tollefsen, *St Theodore the Studite's Defence of the Icons. Theology and Philosophy in Ninth-Century Byzantium*, Oxford 2018; О.Ю. Гончарко, Д.Н. Гончарко, Логические идеи в Византии в период второго иконоборчества, в: *Логика и онтология в византийской догматической полемике. Очерки*, сост. Д.С. Бирюков, В.М. Лурье, Санкт-Петербург ²2020 [O.J. *Goncharko*, D.N. *Goncharko*, Logical Ideas in Byzantium during the Second Icono-

Even during the first phase of the controversy, John Damascene synthesized, through his Πηγὴ γνώσεως, a conceptual system that, along with other innovations and achievements of the era, would gain nearly unquestionable validity by the 9th century.

6.3 *Byzantine Classicism*

The accumulation of logical skill and philosophical knowledge during the period of the iconoclastic controversy resulted in a new cultural paradigm. The thought processes demanded and realized a more extensive and stable knowledge of the Hellenic philosophical tradition by virtue of an already solid distance and the conceptual appropriation of this tradition into the perspective of the Christian worldview and Christian philosophy. Christian culture was finally formed, and there was a clear awareness of the completion of this process. Now the Christian fathers were viewed as the true classics of their own culture. Their own classical heritage was probably already generalized and systematized parallel to the distanced and pedagogically stylized use of ancient literature and philosophy. New dominants were established, in whose perspective the conceptual frameworks and methods of Hellenic thinkers were absorbed as a productive foundation for a different program. The new style of thinking and behavior should not be considered the beginning of the Byzantine period per se, and even less as some kind of "renaissance". In the course of the ninth and tenth centuries, so-called Byzantine classicism emerged.[247] Its undoubted founder and originator was Photius of Constantinople. Among the most influential authors were Leo the Mathematician, Nicetas of Byzantium and Arethas of Caesarea. The number of authors actively writing during this period is not particularly high. However, the period was extremely productive

clasm, in: *Logic and Ontology in Byzantine Dogmatic Polemics: Essays*, eds. D. Biriukov, B.M. Lourié, St. Petersburg ²2020—Russian], 202–238; В.М. Лурье, Логика иконопочитателей в период второго иконоборчества, в: Ibid. [B.M. Lourié, The Logic of the Iconophiles during the Second Iconoclasm, in: *Logic and Ontology in Byzantine Dogmatic Polemics: Essays*, eds. D. Biriukov, B.M. Lourié, St. Petersburg ²2020—Russian], 239–254; Г. Каприев, Аристотелистката аргументация в *Антиритики срещу иконоборците* на Теодор Студит и при Иоан Дамаскин, в: *Християнство и култура*, 3 (2017) [G. Kapriev, Aristotelian Argumentation in the Anti-Iconoclast Antirrhetica of Theodore Studite and in John Damascene, in: *Christianity and Culture*, 3 (2017)—Bulgarian], 49–61.

247 Cf. D.S. White, Patriarch Photius—A Christian Humanist, in: *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 25 (1964), 198; P. Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin*, Paris 1971, 196 et 204; G. Kapriev, *Philosophie in Byzanz*, Würzburg 2005, 161; G. Kapriev, Byzantinischer Klassizismus (9.–10. Jahrhundert), in: *Byzanz. Judentum* (Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie, begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg, Die Philosophie des Mittelalters, Bd. 1), eds. A. Brungs, G. Kapriev, V. Mudroch, Basel 2019, 34–48.

culturally and historically. Most of the oldest manuscripts by ancient authors known to us originate at this time. As products of the (incorrectly named) "Encyclopedism of the 10th century," compendia of various kinds were created: for medicine, veterinary medicine, agriculture, military technology, state affairs. During the 10th century, the Anthologia Palatina and the Suda were compiled: clear signs of intensive intellectual activity. The period from the late 9th to the late 10th century was, not least, an era of collection, preservation, and systematization.[248]

6.4 *The Lines of Anthropocentrism and Theocentrism*

The development of Byzantine culture around the beginning of the 11th century was defined by worsening relations with the Latin Church and, simultaneously, by the intensification of East-West dialogue, particularly in the sphere of philosophy.

In no way were the events of 1054 interpreted as a real (let alone "great") schism between East and West. However, they did exacerbate existing issues. At the same time, the fund of ancient philosophy was increasingly integrated into the domain of Byzantine philosophy. One contribution to this was made by the School of Philosophy founded in 1045 in Constantinople under Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos, whose first consul (ὕπατος τῶν φιλοσόφων) Michael Psellus became. Apart from a specialized interest in Aristotle, Athenian and especially Proclean Neoplatonism became popular in the 11th and 12th century.

In the 12th century, personal contacts between Byzantine and Latin philosophers and speculative theologians multiplied. Debates, made possible by the presence of Latin scholars in Constantinople, influenced the cultural climate. The work of Latin translators such as Burgundio of Pisa, Jacob of Venice, and Moses of Bergamo, who collaborated with Byzantine commentators from the circle of Anna Komnene (Michael of Ephesus, Eustratius of Nicaea) during the first half of the century in Constantinople, also contributed to this cultural exchange.

Towards the end of the 10th century, two tendencies began to emerge within Byzantine culture. Their development, modification, clashes and mutual influences shaped the contours of philosophy in Byzantium until the end of the

248 Cf. N.G. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium*, London–Cambridge, Mass. 1996, 79–147; P. Schreiner, Die enzyklopädische Idee in Byzanz, in: *Encyclopedic Trends in Byzantium?*, eds. P. v. Deun, C. Macé, Leuven 2011, 3–28; P. Magdalino, Orthodoxy and Historyin tenth-century Byzantine 'Encyclopedism', in: *Encyclopedic Trends in Byzantium?*, 143–159; C. Sode, Sammeln und Exzerpieren in der Zeit Konstantins VII. Porphyrogennetos, in: *Encyclopedic Trends in Byzantium?*, 161–176.

actual Byzantine period. A dual split in the paradigm can be observed, which began with the Cappadocians and was considered decisive for thinkers up to Photius of Constantinople and the other representatives of "Byzantine classicism".

One tendency, which can be termed "theocentric," was based on a biblical conception of man and affirmed the influence of divine grace over all areas of human activity. The "anthropocentric" orientation was built upon the understanding of autonomous human intellect and its natural potencies. The emblematic figures of the two lines of thought are Symeon the New Theologian and Michael Psellus.

It is not easy to identify the theologically "wrongly educated" philosophers branded as such by Symeon. Apart from his direct opponent, Stephen of Nicomedia, no other significant speculative thinkers from this period are known to us. However, Michael Psellus testifies that, during the reign of Basil II (976–1025), many philosophers and rhetoricians interested in the sciences purely for their own sake emerged.[249] Figures such as John Mauropus, John Xiphilinus and Psellus himself appear as the next generation. His successor as ὕπατος τῶν φιλσόφων, Iohn Italus, was publicly attacked by the philosophically trained Nicetas Stethatos, a disciple of Symeon.[250]

Neither of the two lines should be characterized as a favorite. One may say, however, that the relatively stronger detachment of philosophy from the general epistemological corpus was a result of the activity of Psellus and his successors. Philosophy took on a more clearly defined shape and higher disciplinary autonomy.

6.5 *The Philosophy of the Palaeologian Period*

The "Disaster of 1204"[251] is identified as the explosive point in the schism between Constantinople and Rome.[252] Only thereafter did the word "orthodox" begin to be used, not against Heretics, but against Western Christians.[253] Thus, the so-called Palaeologian Renaissance should be more precisely defined as a permanent crisis. The intellectual flourishing during this period should rather

249 Michael Psellus, Chronographia, in: *The History of Psellus*, ed. C. Sathas, London 1899, 15, 10–15.

250 D. Krausmüller, Aristotle in Cappadocian grab: the trinitarian speculation of Nicetas Stethatos and Leo of Chalcedon, in: Erytheia, 37 (2016), 37–54.

251 S. Runciman, *The Last Byzantine Renaissance*, Cambridge 1970, 5 et 14.

252 J.M. Hussey, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire*, Oxford 1990, 144–146.

253 Cf. P. Lemerle, L'Orthodoxie byzantine et l'oecuménisme médiéval: les origins des ‚schisme' des Eglises, in: *Bulletin de l'association Guillaume Budé*, 2 (1965), 244–245.

be seen as the result of the hectic overproduction of designs aimed at reconstructing the cultural whole,[254] which were conceived, however, as elements of Byzantium's established cultural model. This is not to say that innovative problematics, themes, approaches, and attempts to solve problems do not gain visibility.

6.5.1 Attitude towards Latin Culture

Despite the traumatic overall tone, the connection with Western culture remained a cornerstone of philosophical thought as well. The self-evidence of the oikumene was already questioned, but not the East's awareness of cultural unity. The Western dimension continued to be understood as a necessary component of the universal Christian cultural world. The confrontation with the Latins, interpreted as "our own stranger" or "our other," was sought within the framework of a civilizational community. It was in this period that the translation of texts by Latin thinkers began. This translation work began in the 13th century with Manuel Holobolos and was continued by Maximus Planudes with Augustine's *De Trinitate* and Boethius' *De consolatione philosophiae*. The majority of translations of fundamental works by Thomas Aquinas, Augustine, Jerome, Boethius, Anselm of Canterbury, and Hervaeus Natalis followed in the 14th century, most of them produced by Demetrius Cydones, Prochorus Cydones and Manuel Kalekas. In the 15th century George Scholarius translated works by Thomas Aquinas, Radulphus Brito, Peter of Spain. There are good reasons for the assertion: "Spiritual communication between East and West almost stopped even before the fall of Constantinople just after the terrible Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438–1439)."[255]

Four types of behavior emerge. Radical antilatinism was practiced by a minority of authoritative figures (Philotheus Kokkinos and Plethon among them). The positions of, for example, the Cydones brothers or Manuel Chrysoloras, were the exact opposite, interpreting the imposition of the Western cultural model as a universally valid norm for the whole of Christian culture. Selective reception and the respective appropriation of Western culture were widespread. In most cases, however, they were based on only superficial knowledge of the Latin tradition. One exception was the unconventional figure of Nicholas Kabasilas. Fully aware that he belonged to the Greek-language

254 Cf. T.M. Kolbaba, Repercussions of the second Council of Lyon (1274): Theological Polemic and the Boundaries of Orthodoxy, in: *Greeks, Latins and Intellectual History 1204–1500*, eds. M. Hinterberger, C. Schabel, Leuven–Paris–Walpole, MA 2011, 66.

255 N. Loudovikos, *Analogical Identities: The Creation of the Christian Self. Beyond Spirituality and Mysticism in the Patristic Era*, Turnhout 2019, 355.

tradition, he laid out his options for all productive guidelines. The fourth type was engaged reception, aiming for a far-reaching appropriation of the achievements and accumulations of contemporary Latin culture. Representatives of this attitude strove to contribute to a synthesis of Christian culture based on common heritage. Some (such as the exemplary Bessarion[256]) aimed at integrating and thus preserving the achievements of Byzantine traditions in Western culture, which they interpreted as more viable. Another group (exemplified by George Scholarius), which also did not seek to overcome the West, understood the opposition, not as a confrontation between two cultures, but as a competition between two traditions of a single culture, which were considered compatible and complementary. The emphasis was on integrating Western achievements into the Byzantine culture of thought.

6.5.2 Cultural Patriots and "Conservatives"

With no direct connection to the choice of a particular attitude towards the West, another division within Byzantine culture, also affecting philosophy, established itself in the course of the 13th century.

The catastrophe of 1204 led to the formation of Hellenic cultural patriotism due to a new awareness of Hellenic heritage and Greek tradition.[257] The word "Hellenic" began to lose its pejorative connotation; it no longer simply meant "pagan." This circumstance is largely due to the exile of the state's nobility to Nicaea. The empire was permanently concentrated in historically Greek territories. Nicaea, but also Thessaloniki and even Constantinople began to be praised as a "new Athens" because of the level of education. This fact did not stimulate the educational and cultural development of the then existing Athens.

Philotheus Kokkinos himself, who otherwise refuses the cultural patriotic line, puts the fact that Constantinople had from the beginning become the mother and home of the words and wisdom of the Hellenes at the head of his

256 Cf. J. Demetracopoulos, Cydones Redivivus: Bessarion's Self-placement between Greeks and Latins, the Scholastic 'Quaestio', and the Hard Quest for Truth, in: *Bessarion's Treasure: Editing, Translating and Interpreting Bessarion's Literary Heritage*, ed. S. Mariev, Berlin–New York 2021, 23–87.

257 Cf. S. Runciman, *The Last Byzantine Renaissance*, Cambridge 1970, 14–22; J. Meyendorff, Victory of the Hesychasts in Byzantium: Ideological and Political Consequences, in: *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia. A Study of Byzantino-Russian Relations in the Fourteenth Century*, Cambridge 1981, 96–118; G. Steiris, History and Religion as Sources of Hellenic Identity in Late Byzantium and the Post-Byzantine Era, in: *Genealogy*, 4 (2020), 4–12.

eulogy to the city. It had attracted the Stoa, the Peripatetics and the Academy and unified them through the εὐσεβεία, that is, right faith, leading these teachings into truth by overcoming the myths, impiety, lies and fallacies spread by them.[258]

Now several intellectuals were beginning to perceive Hellenism and Hellenic civilization as their own cultural value and cultural foundation. Hellenophile cultural patriots remained loyal to both the imperial political norm and (perhaps with the exception of late Plethon) the Christian faith. Nevertheless, a new understanding of the core of Byzantine civilization and the order of its priorities began to emerge. Cultural patriots did not actually intend to faithfully restore the Hellenic cultural world to the original. Through their stylized and instrumentalized image of Hellenism, they pragmatically sought paths to secularize their contemporary culture.

The slogan "We are Greeks by ethnicity and culture," proclaimed by the cultural patriots and particularly soundly by Plethon and the intellectual circle around him, is opposed by the statement of George Scholarius: "I am a Hellene by birth, but I would never say that I am a Hellene. I do not believe in what the Hellenes believed. I derive my name from my faith and, if asked what I am, I answer: a Christian."[259] The γένος τοῦ Χριστοῦ removes and dominates the "Ethnos of the Hellenes." This was the core of the program that formed the foundation of the "conservatives." They stood for the οἰκουμένη and Roman-Christian universalism and strove to preserve the Christian community centered on the New Rome, along with its multiethnicity. Without underestimating or prohibiting classical education, they considered insistence on the level of the ethnic as decadence.

First, it should be established that this is not a clash between "innovators" and "reactionaries." Both parties emerge from an understanding of the new historical circumstances and build their programs on it. In this sense, both can be defined as innovative. On the other hand, it should be noted that the efforts of both the cultural patriots and the "conservatives" are directed towards renovating, or rather "rehabilitating," the established intellectual and cultural model, rather than replacing it.[260]

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258 Philotheos Kokkinos, Λόγος ἐγκωμιαστικὸς εἰς τὸν ἐν ἁγίοις πατέρα ἡμῶν Γρηγόριον ἀρχιεπίσκοπον Θεσσαλονίκης [Encomiastic Oration on Our Holy Father Gregory, Archbishop of Thessalonica], in: PG 151, 554B.

259 Cf. *Oeuvres complètes de Georges* (*Gennadios*) *Scholarios*, v. 3, eds. L. Petit, X.A. Sidéridès, M. Jugie, Paris 1930, 252.

260 Cf. G. Kapriev, Vier Arten und Weisen, den Westen zu bewältigen, in: *Knotenpunkt Byzanz. Wissensformen und Kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen* (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 36), eds. A. Speer, P. Steinkrüger, Berlin–Boston 2012, 3–31.

Despite all their differences, Byzantine intellectuals ultimately maintained the tensions between the theocentric and anthropocentric ways of thinking even in the last period of Byzantium.

6.5.3 A Correction of the Discourse in Experiential Theology

In the course of the 14th century at the latest, the necessity of philosophical theology became apparent even for representatives of spiritual theologizing. Processes during the crisis period motivated an identity crisis. This situation also directly affected theological literature. It became evident that a pious or saintly way of life was no longer able to guarantee a directly correct theological discourse. The self-evident identity between true and correct thinking was noticeably shaken. Added to this was the fact that the fund of theological terminology had already become excessively large and subtle, and the procedures of argumentation and interpretation could not be mastered spontaneously.

A decisive step was taken by Gregory Palamas. He recognized the deficiency of ascetic discourse and the need for rational argumentation without appeal to theological experience. His writings should be viewed as a rationalization of reflection on mystical experience and its philosophical justification and expression. Palamas sought to impart a new quality to the theocentric philosophical ethos. Against this background, it should not surprise us that representatives of earlier styles branded him and his followers pejoratively as "new theologians" (καινοὶ θεολόγοι)[261] and his teachings as new theology (νέα θεολογία),[262] opposing piety, with particular attention paid to his methodological approach. Nicephorus Gregoras directly accused him of being seduced by the apparent power of reason, attempting to answer the question of the relationship between God's essence and activity.[263] Palamas initiated a principled return to the tradition of Maximus the Confessor and John Damascene, based on new logical-metaphysical approaches. This trend culminated in the work of George Scholarius.[264]

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261 Gregorius Palamas, Contra Gregoram, 6, 16, 61, in: *Ἰρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα*, τ. 4, επιμ. Π. Χρήστου, Θεσσαλονίκη 1992 (ed. Christou IV), 432, 27.

262 Ibid., 5, 26, 105, ed. Christou, 368, 10–12.

263 Cf. Cf. Nikephoros Gregoras, Ρωμαϊκή Ἱστορία [Roman History], III, 319, 10–11, in: Nikephoros Gregoras, Rhomäische Geschichte, III, ed. F. Tinnefeld, Stuttgart 2007, III, 319; F. Tinnefeld, Zur intellektuellen Polemik des Nikephoros Gregoras, in: Encyclopedic Trends in Byzantium?", eds. P. v. Deun, C. Macé, Leuven 2011, 355; T. Boiadjiev, Nikephoros Gregoras, in: *Byzanz. Judentum* (Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie, begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg, Die Philosophie des Mittelalters, Bd. 1), eds. A. Brungs, G. Kapriev, V. Mudroch, Basel 2019, 141.

264 Cf. M.-H. Blanchet, *Georges-Gennadios Scholarios* (*vers 1400–vers 1472*). *Un intellectuel orthodoxe face à la disparition de l'empire byzantin*, Paris 2008.

6.5.4 Thomists, Platonists and Aristotelians in Byzantium

An expansion of philosophical phenomena during the Byzantine era occurred through the establishment of Byzantine Thomism, as well as the emergence of explicit forms of Platonism and Aristotelianism.

The beginning of Thomism in Byzantium dates from the translation of Thomas Aquinas' *Summa contra gentiles* (under the title Καθ' Ἑλλήνων), completed by Demetrius Cydones on December 25, 1354. He and his brother Prochorus decisively contributed to the implementation of occidental scholastic methodology within the framework of Byzantine philosophy and theology. The number of authors known to us is not particularly high. Given the circles formed around Demetrius Cydones and Manuel Kalekas, however, it should be concluded that they were not a marginal or insignificant group. In a series of publications, John Demetracopoulos demonstrates the influence of Thomas Aquinas, noticeable to some extent in almost all Byzantine philosophers of the late 14th and especially the 15th century.

In 553 Plato was anathematized by the Fifth Ecumenical Council, which equated him with Mani, Epicurus, and Marcion (the condemnation was reaffirmed in 1082 and 1351). The first philosopher known to deal directly with Plato was Leo the Mathematician, who wrote a recension, or "correction" (διόρθωσις) of Plato's texts around the middle of the 9th century. The discussion of Plato is more extensive in the works of Photius of Constantinople, who attacked his work on all fronts. The transformation of Neoplatonism into a kind of salon fashion in the 12th century prompted Nicholas of Methone to create his highly competent treatise *Refutation of the Theological Elements of Proclus, the Platonic Philosopher*. The debates between Nicephorus Choumnos (1250–1327) and Theodore Metochites (1270–1332), which did not receive wider reception, however, can be interpreted as the first explicit confrontation between antiplatonists and pro-platonists in Byzantium. There are grounds for speaking of the appearance of genuine Platonism and definitive Aristotelianism in Byzantine culture only in the 15th century.

The controversy about the value of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy was initiated by Plethon's *De differentia* (1439), a sharp response by George Scholarius and a similarly pointed response by Plethon. Arguments that Plethon's formidable anti-Aristotelianism and Scholarius' fervent pro-Aristotelianism stem from their appropriation of Thomistic integration of Aristotelian doctrine into the Christian tradition are put forward.[265] The dispute was not limited to

265 J.A. Demetracopoulos, Georgios Gennadios-Scholarios' *Florilegium Thomisticum*. His Early Abridgment of Various Chapters and Quaestiones of Thomas Aquinas' *Summae* and his anti-Plethonism, in: *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales*, 69/1 (2002), 169.

these two thinkers. It included all relevant Byzantine philosophers of the time and became the last great philosophical debate in the history of Byzantine culture. Thus, in the 1440s, the "Aristotelianism-Platonism" opposition emerged, considered by many researchers as valid for the entire cultural history of Byzantium. However, Byzantine Aristotelianism and Byzantine Platonism should rather be designated as the "late vintage" of philosophical developments in Byzantium.[266]

6.5.5 Plato and Aristotle in Byzantium

The topic has been extensively discussed in studies, particularly against the backdrop of the old verdict that Byzantines did not develop an independent philosophy. It continues to be intensely debated today.

The value of ancient philosophy was rarely radically questioned by Byzantine thinkers. To a large extent the philosophical terminology of the Hellenes was adopted by Byzantine philosophers. The works of the Hellenic philosophers were accessible and studied in the educational centers. The philosophical positions of Aristotle and Plato, as well as those of Neoplatonism, were the most widely transcribed, in addition to the appropriation of philosophical elements from the Stoics, Epicureans or Skeptics. (There are 263 Byzantine manuscripts of Plato's dialogues preserved. The manuscripts that hold Aristotle's works are no less than 1,000.[267]) Aspects of their theories are combined by the Byzantine philosophers, although the analogy with the eclectic tradition of late antiquity is formally not incorrect.[268] However, it must be said that this "eclecticism" still had a systematic character because it was based on Christian philosophy.

The study of Plato's reception in Byzantium has a long history, the reason being the prejudiced opinion that philosophy in Byzantium, if not entirely Platonic, then consciously or unconsciously bears a Platonic character.[269]

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266 Cf. the paragraphs 16 („Der byzantinische Platonismus") and 17 („Der byzantinische Aristotelismus") in *Byzanz. Judentum* (Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie, begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg, Die Philosophie des Mittelalters, Bd. 1), eds. A. Brungs, G. Kapriev, V. Mudroch, Basel 2019, 202–241, as well as G. Kapriev, *Philosophie in Byzanz*, Würzburg 2005, 337–340.

267 J. Irigoin, *Tradition et critique des textes grecs*, Paris 1997, 151.

268 K. Ierodiakonou, Introduction, in: *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources*, ed. K. Ierodiakonou, Oxford 2002, 9–10.

269 This opinion was supposedly definitively established by the works of Endre von Ivánka (*Plato Christianus. Übernahme und Umgestaltung des Platonismus durch die Väter*, Einsiedeln 1964) and Herbert Hunger (*Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, Bd. 1, München 1978, 11–41).

There were many channels through which the Platonic legacy flows directly or indirectly into Byzantine philosophy. At the bottom of it all was the turning point achieved by Clement of Alexandria. Clement used Platonic doctrine as an antidote to stoic somatism (rather intuitively internalized in its popular versions by the first Christian speculative thinkers). Platonic henology and Neoplatonically formed apophaticism remained in the philosophical repertoire of Christian thinkers for a long time. The Platonic view of the immortality of the soul and the creation of the world are also valued as positions metaphysically close to Christian doctrine.

At the beginning of the adoption of Platonic ideas in Byzantium was the widespread transcription of Origen, through which Alexandrian Neoplatonism emerged. All major thinkers of the 4th to 6th century were inspired by it. The condemnation of Origenism in the 6th century blocked further direct transcription. However, in the 6th century, the *Corpus Areopagiticum* became known, which offered a Christian adaptation of Athenian Neoplatonism, particularly the teachings of Proclus, which firmly continued throughout the whole Byzantine period.[270] In addition to this came education classes which extensively disseminated authentically Platonic and Neoplatonic themes. On the other hand, Platonism was the only philosophic doctrine explicitly condemned by the church of Constantinople.

Furthermore, the philosophical foundation of the iconoclasts was predominantly Platonic. In the 9th century, Platonism met with sharp criticism, expressed by Photius with particular vehemence. First and foremost, the doctrine of ideas was rejected, unequivocally condemned as Platonic juggling and as philosophically as well as theologically inappropriate, in that it glaringly contradicts the Christian doctrine of God as Creator. The main objection is that it is impossible to express ideas about individuals. There is neither an epistemological nor an ontological relation between Platonic ideas and existing things. Photius also observes that the making of models and likenesses of things to be produced is appropriate for a craftsman; but it is by no means valid for those who create what they want with a simple act. To the arguments against these ideas Photius adds that, if they existed, they would have to remain in the thought (διάνοια) of God in motionless rest and unwaveringly, while they are expressed as predicates for things that exist in constant flux and change. The same dismissive attitude prevails towards Platonic state theory, judged as amoral, contradictory, and utopian; even Plato's literary style is described as

270 Cf. F. Lauritzen, An Orthodox and Byzantine Reception of the *Elements of Theology*, in: *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes*, v. 2, ed. D. Calma, Leiden–Boston 2021, 19–31.

pretentious, limp and feminine.[271] Concurrently, Photius is intensively concerned with Neoplatonic authors, through which the representatives of the Alexandrian school with their emphasis on logic and their attitude towards Aristotle exert an influence on the central teachings of Photius.

Marked by an intensification of philosophical inquiry in a modified form, the period following the mid-11th century sees an increase in interest in Plato. Michael Psellus was accused by his former teacher and fellow student John Xiphilinus of being a Platonist and advocate of Platonism. Psellus firmly rejects this, emphasizing his affiliation with Christian philosophy. In the course of the 12th century, Platonism in its Proclian version even turns into a kind of intellectual fashion, derided as foolish by, for example, Theodore Prodromus. Nicholas of Methone's book is already a highly competent examination of Platonic teachings.[272]

With the exception of the late Plethon and his circle, and even with the more widespread appropriation of Platonic teachings, a large number of his positions remain unacceptable within the horizon of the Christian worldview. Alongside the existence of eternal ideas or forms, as well as the eternal existence of matter, the pre-existence of souls (as opposed to bodies) and metempsychosis are definitely rejected.

Psellus also rejects the pre-existence of souls as it is according to the view of Plato.[273] He too emphasizes that God is not something within the visible nor a disembodied Platonic (κατὰ Πλάτωνα) idea.[274] He does, however, consider the concept of the idea very carefully. As a first meaning, the existence of the idea is represented as the "first thought of the demiurge", like, for instance, the representation (ἀνατύπωσις) of the essence and figuration (διαμόρφωσις) of that which is to be created. Then the idea is defined as a paradigm, a model of the visible cosmos, as it is represented in the noetic διάκοσμος. Thirdly, the idea is formulated as the principle (λόγος) of every being, considered separately from bodies. Immediately afterwards, Psellus positively mentions Aristotle's objection that there are no ideas separate from bodies.[275] By schematizing the knowledge of the soul, the Platonic emphasis on the noetic nevertheless allows him to place the knowledge of certain causes in the second stage, start-

271 Photius, Amphilochiae, 77, 1; 101; 87; 252, in: PG 101, 480AC; 560A; 625A; 1060B.

272 Cf. M. Trizio, Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium (The tradition of Proclus' work in John Italos, Eustratios of Nicaea, Nicholas of Methone), in: *Interpreting Proclus From Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. S. Gersh, Cambridge 2014, 182–226.

273 Michael Psellus, De omnifaria doctrina, cap. 51, ed. Westerink, 38.

274 Ibid, CAP. 15, ed. Westerink, 24.

275 Ibid., Cap. 84, ed. Westerink, 50–51.

ing from hypotheses (ἐξ ὑποθέσεως δὲ ἄρχεται), and at the higher, third stage, the knowledge, denoted as ἀνυπόθετος, realized through Platonic dialectic. The two highest kinds of knowledge are immediate noetic knowledge and overnoetic knowledge, which authentically recognizes the One. With regard to the attainment of the perfect contemplation of God, accessible to the soul, it again aligns with what Plato said.[276] Psellus suggests that Aristotle is the great authority in the field of profane knowledge and especially in logic and physics, while Plato, with his dialectic and dialogistic method, is supposed to be the eminent authority in theology. This conviction becomes the hallmark of the Byzantine philosophers more noticeably influenced by certain Platonic teachings. In this regard, the names of Nicephorus Blemmydes, George Akropolites, Theodore Metochites, Nicephor Gregoras should be mentioned.[277]

The specialized study of the reception of Aristotle and its significance in Byzantium begins with the groundbreaking article by Klaus Oehler[278] (despite publications since the beginning of the 20th century,[279] among which the contribution of Basilios Tatakis, "Πλατονισμὸς καὶ Ἀριτοτελισμὸς στὸ Βυζάντιο,"[280] published in 1953, should be especially mentioned).

It is not particularly difficult to argue that Byzantine philosophers as a whole "relied more on Aristotle than on Plato." This circumstance is due to the fact that they seamlessly incorporate Aristotle's terminology, especially after its "adoption" by Christian thinkers between the 4th and 9th centuries. It is noticeable that, with post-Chalcedonian Christology, there begins an intensive adoption of Aristotelian modes of argumentation, through which Aristotle occupies the central position in the Byzantine intellectual world. The displacement of Plato

276 Ibid., Cap. 196–197, ed. Westerink, 96–97.

277 Cf. e.g. L. Couloubaritsis, Platonismes et aristotélismes à Byzanze dans l'empire de Nicée et sous les Paléologues, in: *Philosophie et sciences à Byzanze de 1204 à 1353*, eds. M. Cacouros, M.-H. Congourdeau, Leuven 2006, 143–156; G. Kapriev, Wichtige Stationen der Wirkungsgeschichte. Byzanz, in: *Platon-Handbuch*, eds. C. Horn, J, Müller, J. Söder, Stuttgart–Weimar 2009, 433–439, second edition: 2017, 446–451; B. Tambrun-Krasker, Byzance, Platon et les platoniciens. Platon et l'Orient, Sep 2012, Bruxelles, halshs-00735103.

278 K. Oehler, *Aristotle in Byzantium*, in: *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 5 (1964), 133–146. His thesis is succinctly expressed in the following sentence: "There are several reasons why the Greek Fathers from the sixth to the eleventh century made more use of Aristotle than of Plato in the shaping and defense of Christian doctrine" (p. 141). In what follows he outlines the influence of Aristotelian philosophy on the later developments of philosophy in Byzantium as well.

279 See the list published by Oehler—*Aristotle in Byzantium*, 146.

280 Cf. Λ. Μπενάκης, Ὁ Ἀριστοτέλες στὸ Βυζάντιο καὶ στὴν Τουρκοκρατία [Aristotle in Byzantium and Under Turkish Rule], in: L. Benakis, *Texts and Studies on Byzantine Philosophy*, Athens 2002, 209.

as a primary philosophical resource becomes evident.[281] Aristotelian terminology was used as a technical language that was not necessarily related to Aristotle's metaphysical views. It is not by chance that the logical writings and the *Physics* of Aristotle, and not so much his *Metaphysics*, were the most used and commented upon. Many Aristotelian positions were criticized, even rejected. First and foremost, the thesis of the eternity of the world was strongly disputed. His teaching on the first mover was assessed as insufficient because it primarily explains the existence of motion, but not of beings. The doctrine of the fifth element was also subject to criticism: it was considered incompatible with Christian doctrine.[282] Added to this was the deficiency of the Aristotelian doctrine of the soul, which—from a Christian point of view—cannot satisfactorily explain either the nature of the soul or its mechanism of cognition, nor its origin or fate after death. Aristotle's concept of virtue and his understanding of the purpose of human life were also called into question.

The correction of Aristotelian concepts began as early as the 4th century. Here, the reformulations of the concepts of "nature" and "essence" should be mentioned, as well as the corresponding reformulation of "individual," the new formulation of "hypostasis," and the questioning of the definition of the soul. By the 7th century, the significance of the form-matter relationship was reduced through Maximus the Confessor's teaching of the λόγοι, which disqualified the Platonic theory of ideas. The transformation of Aristotle's logic from the perspective of strengthened Christian ontology and epistemology continues in the 14th century through the foundation of the apodictic proof of God's existence by Gregory Palamas, which presupposes differentiation between essence, being, and existence—something impermissible from Aristotle's point of view.

Even philosophers presenting themselves as successors to Aristotle did not hesitate to attack basic Aristotelian positions. For example, Photius does not hide his principled preference for the Aristotelian way of philosophizing. Aristotle is portrayed as the philosopher who inspired all Hellenes through the sweetness of his wisdom, which proves to be extremely useful for the edification of Christian doctrine.[283] This circumstance does not prevent him from deviating from Aristotle's position on specific points. This is the case with the basic term "essence" (οὐσία). In the beginning Photius explains that genera and species in the Aristotelian sense do not dwell somewhere beyond the variety of individual things, but are within them. Aristotle, however, defines

281 M. Plested, *Orthodox Readings of Aquinas*, Oxford 2012, 51.

282 Cf. e.g. M. Trizio, Reading and Commenting on Aristotle, in: *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*, eds. A. Kaldellis, N. Siniossoglou, Cambridge 2017, 397–412.

283 Photius, Amphilochiae, 77, 10, in: PG 101, 488D–489A.

individual things as primary, and genera and species as secondary essences. Aristotle, insists Photius at this point, approaches the essence inattentively or even carelessly. He sharply criticizes the definition of the essence as "separate essence" (μερικὴ οὐσία), a term that was already discriminated against by Christian authors as early as the 8th century, and justifies the definition of the essence as "the actual form of the individuals" (τὸ προσεχέστατον τοῖς ἀτόμοις εἶδος). He explains that only Aristotle's "secondary essence" should be considered as "essence," because only it can be synonymously expressed while preserving all necessary properties and definitions.[284] The approach demonstrated by Photius was typical for philosophers almost until the end of the Byzantine period. It was somewhat relativized only around the mid-15th century through the establishment of a strict opposition between Platonism and Aristotelianism.

7 "Byzantine Humanism"

The term "Byzantine Humanism" was established by Paul Lemerle.[285] He explains that he uses the words "Humanism" and "Renaissance" in their general and broad sense. Illustrative parallels are drawn with the West and its "Renaissances."[286] Lemerle mentions as hallmarks of Byzantine humanism the preservation of part of the Hellenic heritage, freedom of thought, advancement of knowledge, opposition to the inertia of tradition, as well as scientific spirit and creative originality, the assertion of the meaning and value of παιδεία, resistance to ignorance and rudeness.[287]

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284 Photius, Amphilochiae, 138, in: PG 101, 768D–781A.

285 P. Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin. Notes et remarques sur enseignement et culture à Byzanze des origins au x^e siècle*, Paris 1971.

286 Ibid., 12 ff.

287 Ibid., 302–304 Lemerle refers to texts by G.M. Hartmann, H. Hunger, D.J. Geanakoplos and A. Pertusi—ibid, 8, note 3. Already Karl Krumbacher calls individual Byzantine authors "humanists"—K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur von Justinian bis zum Ende des oströmischen Reiches 527–1453*, München 1897, 18, 21, 276, 454, 482, 500 and 501. Georg Misch denotes the time after 1261 a "Renaissance," ἀναβίωσις (as Theodor Metochites and Nicephorus Gregoras occasionally refer to the return to the ancient intellectual and cultural paradigm) and he associates it with some kind of "early humanism".—G. Misch, Die Schriftsteller-Autobiographie und Bildungsgeschichte eines Patriarchen von Konstantinopel aus dem XIII. Jahrhundert. Eine Studie zum byzantinischen Humanismus, in: *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Erziehung und des Unterrichts*, 21 (1931), 1–16 [= G. Misch, *Geschichte der Autobiographie*, III/2, Frankfurt/M. 1962, 890–903], here p. 1.

In a similar sense, Herbert Hunger in his masterpiece uses the terms "Christian humanism", "Byzantine humanism" and "Byzantine humanists" to a large extent synonymously. This humanism is based on the potential of ancient achievements, owing to an educational tradition uninterrupted since late antiquity. Its cornerstone is to prove the interweaving of ancient philosophical legacy with orthodox dogma.[288] Tzotcho Boiadjiev also understands Byzantine humanism in this sense as well.[289] Again from this perspective, Robert Sinkewicz explains that Gregory Palamas, with his advocacy for the high dignity of humanity, should surely be regarded as one of the great humanists of the Palaeologian Renaissance.[290]

The analogy with the Italian Renaissance is a commonplace for researchers of this period. The word "humanist" (*humanista*) was actually established in the 15th century.[291] It is derived from the concept of *studia humanitatis*, reinforced by Coluccio Salutati and Leonardo Bruni, both successors of Petrarch, who also introduced the word *humanitas* borrowed from Cicero. They believed that it best defined a human dignity associated with the accumulation of a certain type of knowledge. In antiquity, as well as during the Renaissance, *humanitas* meant education (παιδεία), or schooling in the sciences and the arts.[292] Renaissance humanists were subjects of an elitist cultural process, presupposing participation in public and, above all, political life. The result was the formation of specific views on man, his nature and his destiny.[293] However, the systematic resistance of the humanists to the church or the existing social order is an invention of the 19th and 20th centuries. The juxtaposition between "Christian"

288 H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, Bd. 1, München 1978, 49–53, 168 and 464.

289 Ц. Бояджиев, Михаил Псел и византийският хуманизъм, in: Ц. Бояджиев, *Две университетски лекции*, Велико Търново 1997 [T. Boiadjiev, *Michael Psellus and Byzantine Humanism*, Veliko Tarnovo 1997—Bulgarian], 18.

290 R. Sinkewicz, Christian Theology and the Renewal of Philosophical and Scientific Studies in the Early Fourteenth Century: The *Capita 150* of Gregory Palamas, in: *Medieval Studies*, 48 (1986), 351.

291 Cf. e.g. S. Runciman, *The Last Byzantine Renaissance*, Cambridge 1970, 2, 22, 24, 49 and 97; L. Benakis, Byzantine Philosophy, in: L. Benakis, *Byzantine Philosophy. An Introductory Approach*, Saarbrücken 2017, 11.

292 The system of *studia humanitatis* places emphasis on the disciplines of grammar, rhetoric, poetics, history and moral philosophy.

293 For his part, Alexei Losev emphasizes that the program of the Western Renaissance was neither cosmological nor theological, but anthropocentric—А.Ф. Лосев, *Эстетика Возрождения*, Москва ^{2}1982 [A.F. Losev, *The Aesthetics of the Renaissance*, Moscow ^{2}1982—Russian], 16 и 93 (first edition: Moscow 1979).

and "pagan" Renaissance humanism is an anachronism.[294] Both narrower and broader definitions of the concepts of Renaissance humanists prove that the analogy between them and "Byzantine humanism" is an arbitrary one. Points of correspondence are much fewer than moments of discrepancy. The use of the term "humanism" opens even more spaces for arbitrariness.[295]

The ideologization of the term "Byzantine Humanism" only escalated in the 1960s, unfolding in several mutually stimulating directions. In 1959, John Meyendorff asserts: "The victory of Palamas confirms the victory of a Christian humanism over the pagan humanism of the Renaissance."[296] In order to avoid the ambiguity of the term "humanism", he subsequently proposed calling all Byzantine scholars from Photius to Plethon "Byzantine humanists."[297] Meyendorff's position also underwent escalation. First, a gap between palamism and humanism is postulated. This line culminates in the thesis: "The primacy of spiritual aspirations, characteristic of the hesychastic movement, is manifested in the traditional opposition of Eastern monasticism to humanistic interests in ancient Greek culture and philosophy."[298] Gerhard Podskalsky notes that

294 Cf. P.O. Kristeller, Humanism, in: *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, Seventh edition, Cambridge 2007, 111–138; И. Манова, *Норма и реформа в ренесансовата философия. Лоренцо Вала и неговата хуманистична критика на аристотелизма*, София 2011 [I. Manova, *Norm and Reform in Renaissance Philosophy: Lorenzo Valla and His Humanistic Critique of Aristotelianism*, Sofia 2011—Bulgarian], 17–26.

295 The term "humanism" came into usage only in the late 18th century. Through it, intellectual movements in various historical contexts have been designated. From the outset, the concept encompasses both the transition from the Middle Ages to the modern era and classical education, contrasting it with practical-technical schooling. Later, it came to denote any program claiming to serve the positive, "more humane" shaping of the future. By the 1960s, the concept no longer had a specific meaning. The result of this transition is popularly formulated as follows: "How vague the concept of humanism has become today can be seen from the fact that most people cannot imagine anything specific about it."—E.R. Curtius, Büchertagebuch, Bern–München 1960, 65.

296 He explains at this point: "On the one side, a unified concept of man proves itself, based on the biblical conception of man, affirming the immediate influence of divine grace on all areas of human activity. On the other side stand an intellectualist spirituality that asserts the independence or at least the autonomy of human intellect in relation to matter and denies that real divinization is possible on earth"—J. Meyendorff, *St Gregoire Palamas et la mystique orthodoxe*, Paris 1959, 176. Influenced by these two sentences, I too once spoke about a theocentric and an anthropocentric humanism in Byzantium—G. Kapriev, *Philosophie in Byzanz*, Würzburg 2005, 201.

297 J. Meyendorff, Society and Culture in the fourteenth century. Religious problems, in: *Actes du XIV Congres International des Etudes Byzantines*, eds. M. Berza, E. Stanescu, Bucarest 1974, 114.

298 J. Meyendorff, *Orthodoxie et catholicité*, Paris 1965, 85; J. Meyendorff, Byzanz, in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Berlin–New York 1981, 519; J. Meyendorff, Two Visions of the Church:

Meyendorff reduced the number of educated humanists a priori to very few or insignificant, and the persons identified in this way are marginalized mainly as (particular) "Westerners" or "heretics," or as elements alien to Byzantium.[299] This situation provokes his counterattack. However, it is not difficult to notice that he effortlessly adopts the defining basic theses of his opponents.

In Podskalsky's masterpiece, the term "humanism" appears almost in the form in which the term was given to Hunger. "Humanism" can be equated with a high appreciation of classical philosophy and ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία.[300] It is admitted that there is no confrontation between monasticism and secular thinkers.[301] Nevertheless, even here, the drawing of a distinct line between humanism and mystical theology is noted, almost equating them respectively with Western scholasticism and Eastern spirituality.[302] A complete opposition between humanists and palamites is postulated.[303] Twenty years later, in an article[304] described by Podskalsky as programmatic,[305] this differentiation is pushed to the extreme. In his last book (*Von Photios zu Bessarion*) he sharpens his stance. The common characteristics of the position formed in a humanistic manner in Byzantium are multiplied. Humanism is contrasted with a Palamitic Hesychasm[306] with its "anti-educational orthodoxy." To this a third group is added, characterized by a specific "'schizophrenia' of personal identity." All in all, it is said to be formed by Marc Eugenicus and Manuel Gabalas.[307] However, the accentuated criteria are not sufficient for the non-ideological identification of the specific representatives of this "humanism." In Podskalsky's approach, there is a risk that the term "humanists" will encompass all the intel-

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East and West on the Eve of Modern Times, in: *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, eds. J. Raitt, B. McGinn, J. Meyendorff, New York 1987, 442—quoted after G. Podskalsky, Entwicklungslinien des griechisch-byzantinischen theologischen Denkens (bis zum Ende der Turkokratie), in: *Ostkirchliche Studien*, 47 (1998), 36–37.

299 G. Podskalsky, Entwicklungslinien des griechisch-byzantinischen theologischen Denkens (bis zum Ende der Turkokratie), in: *Ostkirchliche Studien*, 47 (1998), 37.

300 G. Podskalsky, *Theologie und Philosophie in Byzanz*, München 1977, 59, 64, 74 and 126.

301 Ibid., 36.

302 "The lasting result of the protracted struggle [in the 14th century—GK] finally led to a radical rupture between anti-educational orthodoxy (of all estates, but especially of hierarchy and monasticism) and open-to-assimilation theological science"—Ibid.

303 Ibid., 172–173.

304 G. Podskalsky, Entwicklungslinien des griechisch-byzantinischen theologischen Denkens (bis zum Ende der Turkokratie), in: *Ostkirchliche Studien*, 47 (1998), 34–43.

305 G. Podskalsky, *Von Photius zu Bessarion. Der Vorrang humanistisch geprägter Theologie in Byzanz und deren bleibende Bedeutung*, Wiesbaden 2003, 15.

306 The defenders of the mystical theology of "uncreated light (divine energies)"—ibid., 13.

307 Ibid., 15.

lectually active philosophical-theological authors in Byzantium—regardless of their intellectual or spiritual self-identification, as long as they are personally sympathetic to the author.

The book *The Byzantine Humanism of the 14th and 15th century* by Igor Medvedev was published in 1976.[308] Medvedev manages to stay as far away as possible from the ideological templates of historical materialism.[309] In the Soviet era, such a departure was not allowed to be unlimited if one wanted to publish. In addition, Medvedev wished to "feel free from terminological bondage."[310] He pointed out that the term "humanist" regarding individual representatives of Byzantine culture is almost always used, not from a scientific-terminological perspective but rather as a valorizing categorization.[311] He prefers to talk about "humanistic tendencies" in Byzantium.[312] As characteristics of Byzantine humanism, he mentions the circle of friends and the learned community; Neoplatonism as a philosophical foundation; criticism of Christianity and attempts to create a new religious cult; a return to the Hellenic view of society and the idea of an ethnic nation as a political ideal.[313] He explains that humanistic positions, if not in opposition to the church, then at least outside its teaching, had asserted themselves.[314] The idea that humanism can be understood as a property inherent to Christianity and identified with Christian morality is rejected. This especially applies to the teaching of Palamas. The humanistic concept of man is the ideal of the citizen (*homo civilis*), called on to play an active role in the state.[315] Engaged in natural philosophy and scientific naturalism, humanism is overtly secular, with anticlericalism and "Hellenism" proclaimed as the future perspective of the state.[316]

It is worth taking Medvedev's remark in the foreword to the second edition seriously: "Over the years, my youthful enthusiasm for the results and cultural

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308 И.П. Медведев, *Византийский гуманизм XIV–XV вв.*, Москва 1976 [I. Medvedev, *Byzantine Humanism of the 14th–15th Centuries*, Moscow 1976—Russian].

309 He emphasizes that Byzantine humanism did not contribute to the development of any bourgeoisie of a capitalist type—ibid., 9. He considers claims that, for example, Plethon should be compared to Rousseau and Saint-Simon, presenting him not only as a precursor to utopian socialism but also to scientific socialism with its contemporary concepts, to be absurd and notes a lack of historical sense among their authors—ibid., 143–144.

310 Ibid., 9.

311 Ibid., 3.

312 Ibid., 9.

313 Cf. ibid., 50–87 и 124–138.

314 Ibid., 73.

315 Ibid., 88–90.

316 Ibid., 160 and 170.

achievements of the Western European Renaissance (towards which, objectively speaking, the Byzantine humanists directed Byzantium, perhaps without intending to do so) has diminished. On the contrary, I pay increasingly more attention to the spiritual experience of their opponents, the hesychasts." Medvedev discusses here an "orthodox revival" accomplished by Byzantine hesychasm. He adds that this does not underestimate "the value of the Byzantine humanists. Without them, there probably would not have been even St. Gregory Palamas." At this point he admits that the main figure in his book is Plethon.[317]

For Niketas Siniossoglou, Medvedev is the only high authority.[318] At the same time he is not actually familiar with Medvedev's book.[319] He develops his own concept. Humanism should not be primarily or solely designated by love for classical literature. Byzantine humanists deal and experiment with the philosophical, hermeneutical, moral and political teachings of ancient philosophy, which directly or indirectly clashes with orthodox clerical-monastic authority. Byzantine humanism of the 14th century is the midwife of conceptual philosophical paganism systematized by Plethon in the 15th century. Byzantine humanists are dissidents from the Judeo-Christian ruling class.[320] Byzantine humanism is directly equated with pagan Hellenism, which led to a clash with Christianity in the course of the hesychastic disputes.[321] Philosophical paganism (equated with rationalism) confronts the obscurantism and experiential mysticism of church doctrine. Both are two essentially warring modes of existence. The presence of philosophical essence is ensured through secular and pagan Platonic tendencies, latently present in Byzantine intellectual history.[322] The "real" philosophy in Byzantium must have been, by its "essence," anti-Byzantine.[323]

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317 И.П. Медведев, *Византийский гуманизм XIV–XV вв.*, Санкт Петербург 1997 [I. Medvedev, *Byzantine Humanism of the 14th–15th Centuries*, St. Petersburg 1997—Russian], 5–6.

318 N. Siniossoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium. Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon*, Cambridge 2011, 29.

319 Siniossoglou quotes the second edition of the book several times, but without any page references. He is only partially familiar with Medvedev's theses through five of his articles published in English, Greek, and French.

320 Ibid., 24–25.

321 Ibid., 27.

322 Ibid., 19, 40 and 397.

323 Ν. Σινιόσογλου, Από την ορθότητα των ονομάτων στην ορθότητα των δογμάτων: το πρόβλημα με την βυζαντινή φιλοσοφία, in: *Δευκαλίων*, 27 (2011) [N. Siniossoglou, From the Correctness of Names to the Correctness of Dogmas: The Problem of Byzantine Philosophy, in: *Dekalion* 27 (2011)—Greek], 45–70.

Attempts to "distill" such "Byzantine humanism" appear grotesque. Nonetheless, this design is instrumentalized as a kind of obviousness.[324] First and foremost, however, this anachronistic fiction manages to confirm the inadequacy of the concept of "humanism" with regard to the philosophical and cultural situation in Byzantium. It must be admitted that the usage found in authors such as Misch, Runciman, Lemerle, Hunger, Boiadjiev, or Sinkewicz is still somewhat acceptable. However, the recently escalated ideologically underpinned usage of it is historically and philosophically counterproductive—incorrect and misleading. Therefore, today "Byzantine humanism" basically means nothing.[325]

8 Rationality and Thirst for Knowledge

Among the various misunderstandings regarding the peculiarities of philosophy in Byzantium, a questioning of its rational character may be encountered: a readiness to attribute to it irrational and mystical positions as inherent characteristics.[326] Against the background of interpreting it as theological polemics, it is argued that only the knowledge of God is a legitimate subject of theoretical interest, whereas the study of nature outside of man is illegitimate curiosity.[327]

8.1 *Rationality*

All representatives of the philosophical culture in Byzantium agree on the position of rationality as the undisputed foundation of philosophical thinking. Even the systematic critics of philosophy, among whom Symeon the New Theologian is perhaps the most vehement, consider theoretical philosophy to be the field of the sovereign action of νοῦς and natural reason, driven by thought and logical proofs, by human wisdom and worldly knowledge.[328] With the

324 Cf. D. Gutas, N. Siniossoglou, Philosophy and "Byzantine Philosophy", in: *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*, eds. A. Kaldellis, N. Siniossoglou, Cambridge 2017, 288–289.

325 Cf. G. Kapriev, Warum es keinen ‚byzantinischen Humanismus' gibt?, in: *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales*, 1 (2021), 189–207.

326 Cf. e.g. В. Георгиева, *Византиска филозофија*, Скопје 2001 [V. Georgieva, *Byzantine Philosophy*, Skopje 2001—Macedonian], 11.

327 Hans Blumenberg actually subordinates this determination to all medieval thinking—cf. H. Blumenberg, *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit. Erneuerte Ausgabe*, Frankfurt am Main 1996, 263–350.

328 Cf. e.g. Simeon Novus Theologus, Hymni, 24, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Hymnes 16–40*, ed. J. Koder (Sources chrétiennes 174), Paris 1971, 246,284–291; Id., Tractatus theolog-

Cappadocians at the forefront, this fact is taken for granted by all Byzantine thinkers.

8.1.2 Michael Psellus

The position of Psellus, the emblem of the anthropocentric line of thought, is unmistakable and at the same time typical of Byzantine intellectuals. He stresses that the νοῦς is capable of grasping truth through reason and revelation. The logical striving for truth does not conflict with Christian doctrine. On the contrary, he points out that reasoning is an important part of human nature (ἀνθρωπικώτερον). It reaches its limits only in the inscrutability of God's essence and our limited intellectual power. Psellus repeatedly emphasizes that discursive philosophical thinking, logical syllogisms and, above all, proofs, are what essentially characterize humans and support them in their endeavor to understand reality, especially nature.[329] He understands theory as a preoccupation with both creation and God and summarizes various competencies under the name θεωρία, which he occasionally equates with διάνοια. He tends to integrate cognition about creation into his knowledge program and does not find plausible the reduction which considers everything except God as unimportant.[330]

In this regard his view that humans recognize the thoughts of God through the order of beings, the conformal regularity of natures, and the providence that extends to everything (ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν ὄντων τάξεως, ἀπὸ τῆς ἴσονομίας τῶν φύσεων, ἀπὸ τῆς εἰς τὰ πάντα διοικούσες πρόνοιας) is decisive. The reason for this view is that in everything, in the entire structure of the cosmos, in movement and standstill, there is a Logos. Nothing is ἄλογον.[331]

Psellus puts the emphasis on the *nous* and its constitution. Every intellect has everlasting (αἰώνια) essence-οὐσία, power-δύναμις and activity-ἐνέργεια. Neither by its essence, nor by its power and action, does it fall under the measure of time.[332] The intellect recognizes things by their causes.[333] True knowledge

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icus 2, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Traités théologiques et éthiques 1*, ed. J. Darrouzès (Sources chrétiennes 122), Paris 1966, 132, 30–40.

329 K. Ierodiakonou, Psellus' Paraphrasis on Aristotle's De interpretatione, in: *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources*, ed. K. Ierodiakonou, Oxford 2002, 157–182; K. Ierodiakonou, Michael Psellus, in: *Byzanz. Judentum* (Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Die Philosophie des Mittelalters, Bd. 1), eds. A. Brungs, G. Kapriev, V. Mudroch, Basel 2019, 63.

330 D. Walter, *Michael Psellus: Christliche Philosophie in Byzanz*, Berlin–Boston 2018, 15 und 141–143.

331 Michael Psellus, De omnifaria doctrina, 17, ed. Westerink, 25.

332 Ibid., 23, ed. Westerink, 27.

333 Ibid., 25, ed. Westerink, 28.

is knowledge of principles. It is knowledge of the reasons for this or that fact, regardless of whether it belongs to the area of νοητά or αἰσθητά.[334]

Thanks to the participation of the soul in νοῦς, the soul is also noetic. While the intellect has the εἴδη primarily, the soul possesses them secondarily. The νόησις available in the intellect is different from that which belongs to the soul. The soul can change from νοῦς to ἀνοία, or oscillate between them.[335] Good and valuable knowledge, acquired from the soul (in its unity with the body), instigates the turn to the whole truth (πρὸς πᾶσαν ἀλήθειαν), that is, to scientific knowledge of being (πρὸς τὴν τῶν ὄντων ἐπιστημονικὴν γνῶσιν). In addition, natural contemplation (φυσική θεορία) recognizes the causes of those that are caused.[336] The scientific part of the soul (ἐπιστημονικόν) makes visible the definition (ὁρισμός) derived from quiddity (τὸ τί ἐστι), that is, from being. Reason and theoretical νοῦς recognize essences not through sensory experience, but through their properties (συμβεβηκότα) and the corresponding ἀναφορά. This is the way of knowing necessarily inherent to the soul. It is followed by strictly constructed syllogistic proof (ἀπόδειξις).[337]

Perfection (τελειότης) is to be attained by the return (ἐπιστροφή) to God. God, the prototype, reveals himself completely in those who return to him through scientific reason (ἐπιστημονικός λόγος) and paradigmatic theory (παραδείγματική θεωρία).[338] Man imitating God by ascending in theory becomes an instrument of God (ὄργανον τοῦ Θεοῦ) by looking at God and creative providence from close by.[339]

In this perspective, the thesis Theo Kobusch developed with regard to the cognitive program of Gregory of Nyssa, should be drawn upon. He points out that, according to this program, alignment with God should be understood, not only as a theoretical, but also as a kind of practical approximation. Christian philosophy is a philosophy of life. True theory should result in a transformation of the person contemplating and contribute to human progress.[340] Denis Walter appropriately brings this observation into connection with Psellus's philosophy[341]

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334 Cf. D. Walter, *Michael Psellus: Christliche Philosophie in Byzanz*, Berlin–Boston, 2018, 143–144.

335 Michael Psellus, De omnifaria doctrina, 28–30, ed. Westerink, 29–30.

336 Ibid., 37, ed. Westerink, 32.

337 Ibid., 40–41, ed. Westerink, 34,9–13 et 34,4–7.

338 Ibid., 73, ed. Westerink, 46.

339 Ibid., 72, ed. Westerink, 46,12–13.

340 T. Kobusch, Metaphysik als Lebensform bei Gregor von Nyssa, in: *Gregory of Nyssa, Homilies on the Beatitudes*, eds. H.R. Drobner, A. Viciano, Leiden–Boston 2000, 469–471.

341 D. Walter, *Michael Psellus: Christliche Philosophie in Byzanz*, Berlin–Boston 2018, 132.

8.1.2 Gregory of Sinai and Gregory Palamas

A similar view regarding the place and importance of rationality in relation to the idiosyncrasy of philosophy is also typical of the representatives of the theocentric line of thought, among whose emblematic figures are Gregory of Sinai and Gregory Palamas.

Gregory of Sinai, the systematizer of hesychastic practice, emphasizes that, even in a state of ecstasy, there is still the matter of "reflecting on nature" (κατὰ φύσιν φρένες).[342] There is a prevalent opinion that the primary concern of the hesychasts is fundamentally and unreservedly to reject reasoning or thoughts (λογισμοί). Statements of this kind can sometimes be found in Gregory's works. But when he treats this topic in a specialized way, a much more complicated picture emerges. Nobody can—he insists—do something good or bad without first directing the corresponding thought towards it. The λογισμός is the movement of direction (προβολῆς κίνησις) towards any reality.[343] Gregory distinguishes between natural (φυσικοί), unnatural (παρά φύσιν), and supernatural (ὑπὲρ φύσιν) λόγοι and λογισμοί.[344] The fragmentation of uniform and simple memory, followed by the fall of man, is determined as the beginning and cause of evil thoughts.[345] In this state ignorance is acquired, closely related to sins and passions. Through passions, depravity (πλάνη, Slavic: prelest), the great enemy of truth, establishes the dominance of ignorance in the souls of the heedless.[346] The night of the passions is equated with the darkness of ignorance. Overcoming it is based on natural and supernatural λογισμοί. The separation or abolition of reason and its activity is precisely the way in which man becomes like cattle. The aim is to avoid the corruption of intellect and reason. By this is meant the restoration of the original condition of man, which is defined as the condition κατὰ φύσιν.[347] In it the purified νοῦς reaches its original dignity and pure reason (καθαρός λόγος) has its decisive place:[348] it is a necessary component of grasping the truth.

Gregory Palamas, the theoretical systematizer of hesychasm, clearly emphasizes the dignity of reason. By referring to Isaac the Syrian: "Δύο ψυχικοὺς ἔχομεν ὀφθαλμύς" ("We have two eyes of the soul"),[349] Palamas draws attention to the

342 Gregorius Sinaites, Capita valde utilia per acrostichidem disposita, 59, in: PG 150, 1256B.
343 Sinaites, Capita, 67, in: PG 150, 1258AB.
344 Sinaites, Capita 68, in: PG 150, 1258B.
345 Sinaites, Capita, 60, in: PG 150, 1256B.
346 Sinaites, Capita, 73, in: PG 150, 1260B.
347 Sinaites, Capita, 1, in: PG 150, 1240A.
348 Sinaites, Capita, 2, in: PG 150, 1240A.
349 Gregorius Palamas, Triades 2, 3, 15, ed. Christou, 551, 15–16.

two spheres of human knowledge. With one "eye" one sees the glory of the divine nature, with the other one sees the power and wisdom of God housed in natural things. While possessing the eternal divine light allows immediate and elevating contemplation of God, knowledge of being leads to knowledge of God through mediated rational conclusions.[350] From the "threefold nature"[351] of the human soul, which "alone possesses intellect, reason, and life-giving spirit,"[352] two kinds of knowledge arise: natural and spiritual γνῶσις, whereby the former is purely human knowledge of beings (γνῶσις τῶν ὄντων),[353] that is, rational-discursive knowledge. This kind of knowledge encompasses only what in no way surpasses animal reason. However, the significance of this knowledge should not be underestimated. It is the condition and the basis of all knowledge,[354] including spiritual knowledge of God, as well as speculative theology and philosophy, which do not depart from the realm of words and logical discourse.[355] Philosophy in itself is a divine gift given by the Creator to humanity as a common, natural gift (φυσικόν δῶρον), in order for it to be saved from disastrous ignorance.[356] It gives true knowledge about the being as being and is able to discover its real laws.[357]

8.2 *The Thirst for Knowledge*

Curiosity had already been rebuked by the Hellenic thinkers. Even the etymology of the Greek word περιέργεια carries an indispensably negative connotation. Περὶ τὸ ἔργον means "around the work, around the thing". Similar panning around and its corresponding inefficiency are not tolerated, neither in the practical nor in the theoretical realm.[358] Aristotle defines περίεργον as

350 Palamas, Triades, 2, 3, 15–17, ed. Christou I, 551, 4–554, 13; Palamas, Capita 150, 114, ed. Christou V, 98, 23–27; Palamas, Antirrhetika contra Akindynon, 6, 16, 61, ed. Christou III, 42, 1–2.

351 Palamas, Capita 150, 40, ed. Christou V, 57, 19–21.

352 Palamas, Capita 150, 39, ed. Christou, V, 56, 26–28.

353 Palamas, Capita 150, 123, ed. Christou, V, 104, 17–20.

354 Palamas, Triades, II, 3, 42; III, 1, 30, ed. Christou, I, 575, 29–576, 4; 642, 10–12.

355 Palamas, Epistula I ad Barlaam, 52, in: ed. Christou, I, 290,5–28; Palamas, Triades, I, 3, 42, ed. Christou I, 453, 8–9.

356 Palamas, Triades I, 1, 22; II, 1, 12, ed. Christou I, 385, 29–30; 474, 25–28.

357 Palamas, Triades, II, 1, 7; II, 1, 42, I, 471,5–7; 503,24–504,13. Capita 150, 123, ed. Christou V, 104, 21. Cf. G. Kapriev, Es sind zwei Augen der Seele. Vernunft und Offenbarung gemäß der Hesychasten des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts, in: *Vernunft und Offenbarung*, eds. G. Kapriev, G. Mensching, Sofia 2006, 57–69.

358 Already Heraclitus of Ephesus criticizes sharply πολυμάθεια (DK 22, B 40), which leads to own wisdom and miserable specialized knowledge (κακοτεχνία) (DK 22, B 129). On the other hand, however, he emphasizes that men striving for wisdom have to research a great many things (DK 22, B 35).

superfluous knowledge, the abstraction of which makes the understanding of the subject to be determined clearer.[359] In *Metaphysics*, περίεργον stands for the vain effort of knowledge.[360] Again, the word is used in *Prior Analytics*[361] in the sense of superfluous knowledge, contrasted with necessary knowledge. These established positions find their continuation in the literature of the Christian Greek-speaking authors.

The ascetic representatives of monastic culture constantly rebuke curiosity. In the 7th century, John Climacus speaks out clearly: Εὐθύτης ἐστιν ἀπερίεργος ἔννοια—righteousness, *rectitudo*, is non-curious thinking.[362] "Exercise the non-curious state (ἀπερίεργη κατάστασις). Nothing can harm hesychia more than curiosity," he instructs.[363] This opinion remains unchanged over the centuries. For example, in the 14th century, Gregory of Sinai lists περιέργεια among the passions of the rational part of the soul (τοῦ λογιστικοῦ).[364] They are classified as unnatural evils (τὰ παρὰ φύσιν κακά).[365] Basil the Great, the great model for later ascetic authors, opposes curiosity and malice (περίεργον καὶ κακόηθες) to the mental virtues.[366] Even contact with curious people is rebuked.[367] While Basil emphatically opposes the πολυμάθεια, he praises the φιλαλήθια,[368] the *amor et studium veritatis*.[369] Φιλαλήθια and φιλομάθεια are two virtues which are almost synonymous.[370] The inquisitive soul (φιλομαθὴς ψυχή), Basil teaches, seeks truth as a medicine against ignorance (ἀγνοία).[371]

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359 Top., VI, 3, 140b1–2. In this sense the word is used at several places in the Topics: VI, 1, 139b16–17; VI, 3, 140a36; VI, 3, 140b9; VI, 3, 141a12; VI, 14, 151b20–24.

360 Met., VII, 11, 1036b23; VII, 12, 1038a21.

361 Anal. Pr. I, 32, 47a18–19. Further examples in: M. Leigh, *From Polypragmon to Curiosus: Ancient Concepts of Curious and Meddlesome Behaviour*, Oxford 2013, 10.

362 Climacus, Scala paradisi, 24, in: PG 88, 981B.

363 Climacus, Scala paradisi, 27, in: PG 88, 1116D.

364 Sinaites, Capita valde utilia per acrostichidem disposita, 79, in: PG 150, 1261A.

365 Ibid., 1261B.

366 Basilius Magnus, Constitutiones monasticae, 8, in: PG 31, 1368C.

367 Ibid., 6.1, 1361A.

368 Ibid., 4, 1348B.

369 How the word was translated in ancient times—cf. *Lexicon Graeco-Latinum: quam plurimis locis emendatum, & numerosa verborum accessione cùm ex optimis quibusque authoribus, tum è Budaei commentariis postremò editis locupletatum*, ed. I. Frellonius, Lugdunum 1550, 1460.

370 In the very first sentence of Liber de spiritu sancto, he praises the φιλομάθεια and the φιλοπονία in his addressee Amphilochus of Iconium—Liber de spiritu sancto, 1, 1, in: PG 32, 68A.

371 Basilius Magnus, Liber de spiritu sancto, 1, 1, in: PG 32, 68B–69A.

8.2.1 Michael Psellus

Michael Psellus offers an exemplary description of the conditions of possibility and a uniform motivation and procedure program for the thirst for knowledge. John Duffy draws attention to Psellus' principled position. At the end of the text Περὶ παραδόξων ἀκουσμάτων [*On Paradoxical Accounts*], he states very clearly: "I gather this multitude of knowledge not out of curiosity (οὐ περιεργασίας ἕνεκα), but out love for learning (ἀλλὰ φιλομαθείας). I have by nature an insatiable desire for every kind of subject and I would not want to miss anything, but would even like to know what is under the earth. In my studies, I did not, like most people, accept this and reject that, but made an effort to understand the methods even of disreputable or otherwise objectionable types of knowledge in order to be able to refute their practitioners."[372] As a justification for the acquisition of knowledge, Psellus confronts the φιλομαθεία directly with the περιεργασία. The thirst for knowledge is recommended as a laudable and even necessary activity aimed at understanding the world and everything hidden in it, whether good, evil, or mysterious. The specialized knowledge acquired should not be concealed.[373]

From this perspective, Psellus emphasizes the role of created nature, which functions according to its immanent laws. He leaves only a very limited space for miracles. The laws of nature, although subordinated to divine providence, have relative autonomy.[374] Psellus is deeply interested in purely "natural scientific" questions. For him, the Aristotelian *Physics* is not simply a preliminary stage to metaphysics, but a theoretical prerequisite for independent study of the subjects of Aristotle's other "physical" writings. He is convinced that, in principle, the Aristotelian philosophy of nature is compatible with Christian revelation. The reference is made through Psellus' conception of nature. For him, φύσις is a "middle thing" between God and the world. The φύσις is not an independent principle, but an instrument (ὄργανον) of divine omnipotence: a power implanted into things by God.[375] It is the principle of movement and standstill, as well as of existence.[376]

372 *Michaelis Pselli philosophica minora*, vol. I, ed. J.M. Duffy, Stuttgart–Leipzig 1992, 113, 100–106.

373 Cf. J. Duffy, Hellenic Philosophy in Byzantium and the Lonely Mission of Michael Psellus, in: *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources*, ed. K. Ierodiakonou, Oxford 2002, 148–149.

374 S.P. Panagopoulos, The Philosophical Contribution of a Homo Byzantinus: The *De omnifaria doctrina* of Michael Psellus (1017/1018–1078 AD), in: *De Medio Aevo*, 1, 5 (2014), 171.

375 L. Benakis, *Texts and Studies on Byzantine Philosophy*, Athens 2002, 342 and 396.

376 It is the constituent form, by which the natural thing first gets its shape and then actually

The purpose of his activity, Psellus explains, is to achieve the truest understanding of being, knowledge of creation, and of good and evil. The theory of creation should not have an instrumental character. On the other hand, there is no contradiction between occupation with creation and that with God. An abundance of knowledge of creation allows us to approach God because it allows us to sense his perfection. According to Psellus, a completed status of earthly perfection exists, established when there is identity between man and the λόγος.[377] The one Logos is in everything.[378] That is why the subject of research in this book covers a breadth of topics, beginning with the interpretation of the terms "principle" (ἀρχή) and "element" (στοιχεῖον) and continuing with explanations of other basic terms. Then the discussion follows a series of subjects of thought, among which appear Everlastingness and time, the five senses, the manner of conception, the emergence of masculine and feminine, dreams, health, illness, old age. Considerable space is occupied by a number of cosmological facts, such as the essence of the sky, the stars, the planets, and especially the Sun, the Moon, and the Earth, as well as comets, leading to inquiries into the nature of the seasons, rain, hail, snow, frost and dew, rainbows, lightning, whirlwinds.[379] After discussing earthquakes and various types of water, a number of specialized questions follow, such as: why the polyp changes its color when clinging to a rock; why is the appearance of a squid above water a sign of bad weather; how the growth of roses occurs; what is the great hunger (βούλιμος).[380]

The expansion of the circle of knowledge takes on a progressively unfolding form. The human soul is everlasting in essence, but its energy participates (μετέχει) in time. It does not have all νοήματα in itself at the same time, but it passes (μεταβαίνει) from one thought to the other.[381] Ascending in theory, thereby imitating God and realizing his return (ἐπιστροφή) to God through scientific reason and paradigmatic theory, man is conceived, as mentioned above, as an instrument of God.[382]

It is only from this perspective that Psellus' program of thirst for knowledge can be seen in its seriousness. It is by no means about being led by curiosity

becomes a φυσικόν—L. Benakis, *Texts and Studies on Byzantine Philosophy*, Athens 2002, 364.

377 D. Walter, *Michael Psellus: Christliche Philosophie in Byzanz*, Berlin–Boston 2018, 145–147 and 187–188.

378 Psellus, De omnifaria doctrina, 17, ed. Westerink, 25.

379 Ed. Westerink, 68–78.

380 Ed. Westerink, 83–95.

381 Psellus, De omnifaria doctrina, 107, ed. Westerink, 59.

382 Ibid., 72–73, ed. Westerink, 46.

(περιεργασία) to run back and forth in pursuit of situational interests. It is not even about some purely epistemic or cognitive scientific endeavor. The concentrated activity of scientific reason has a clearly laid out ontological goal: to expand the boundary and definition (ὅρος) of the human. In this way the borderline of the anthropological, of the *condicio humana*, is brought ever closer to God and the ποιουμένη πρόνοια—the creating providence. This is the purpose of scientific research and reflection, whose motor is the φιλομαθεία, the thirst for knowledge.

8.2.2 John Damscene and Gregory Palamas

Some of Psellus' philosophical figures are unique in Byzantine culture. Is this also true of his thirst-for-knowledge process? Can a similar program be deciphered in other authors? First, we must look at those who have composed systematic writings. This mainly concerns John Damascene with his *Fons scientiae* and Gregory Palamas with the *Capita 150*, which, moreover, are not classified within the intellectual trend commonly associated with Psellus.

In Damascene, this approach is obvious. He considers ἀμαθία (ignorance) and ἄνοια (imbecility) as unpardonable and unworthy, not ignorance itself, especially when they present themselves as knowledge. As an antidote, he decides to imitate the method of the bee (τῆς μελίσσες τρόπος) in order to attain the peculiarity of truth and salvation by striving to discard and destroy that which belongs to what is falsely called knowledge (ψευδώνυμος γνῶσις), error (πλάνη) and falsehood (ψεῦδος). To this end, he sees it as his duty to present not only what has been brought forth by distinguished Christian teachers, but also the best of the Hellenic sages, because he is convinced that all good (ἀγαθόν) is given to men by God. He emphasizes the benefit from the gathering of knowledge to the fullest possible extent. Knowledge (γνώσις) is presented as the light of the rational soul and ignorance as darkness.[383] The pursuit of knowledge and the acquisition of theoretical content are interpreted as basic anthropological traits.

Gregory Palamas' systematic work demonstrates the same intention.[384] The main purpose of the *Capita 150* is to establish the superiority of spiritual γνῶσις

383 *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, Band 7, ed. B. Kotter, Berlin 1969, 52, 29–53, 64.

384 Gregory Palamas has already been taken as a subject in the perspective of this topic. Britta Müller-Schauenburg analyzed his behavior, shaped by "curiosity for knowledge" during his short-term Turkish captivity in 1352 and his written testimonies about it. The conclusion is that Palama's curiosity proved to be about knowledge not yet possessed, as well as about the ways of living and thinking of others. previously unknown to him–B. Müller-Schauenburg, Gregorios Palamas und die kulturelle Neugier—Relecture

when it comes to the knowledge of God. Nevertheless, the first 29 chapters are devoted to natural philosophy. Robert Sinkewicz analyzes these chapters.[385] He shows that they are basically reflections on the nature of human knowledge and its applicability to the natural and supernatural realms. In them, Palamas opposes the Hellenic sciences and demonstrates, without using theological arguments, a Christian systematic view of the cosmos by means of which he discusses his understanding of the limits of natural human knowledge. He asks what can be learned about the world and God through man's natural faculties. The assessment of natural intellectual activity is by no means a negative one. It is capable of an adequate understanding of the natural, including astronomical facts.

The first sentence of the book reads, "That the world had a beginning both nature teaches and history confirms; the discovery of the arts, the introduction of laws and the governance of states also clearly affirm this."[386] The arts and sciences are based on the thoughts (λογισμοί) of the mind-νοῦς acquired through the mediation of the senses and the imagination, which it formulates through distinctions, analyses and syntheses.[387] An important goal of the text is to exhaust positively the limits of natural cognition by reaching and expanding them, so that the knowing person may thereby enter the realm of spiritual cognition. The exploration of created nature and the thirst for knowledge as an exploratory driving force play a primary role. How high the stakes are is explained by the next chapters, in which Palamas deals with rational nature. He discusses the mental frame, human modes of cognition, and the high dignity of human nature. The triadic form (τὸ τριαδικόν) of our knowledge (γνῶσις) shows, Palamas argues, that we are image of God to a higher degree than the angels because our cognition encompasses all modes of cognition. We have at the same time sensitive, rational and noetic cognition. The sensory faculty,

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einer theologischen Leitfigur, in: *Knotenpunkt Byzanz*, eds. A. Speer, P. Steinkrüger (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 36), Berlin–New York 2012, 290 and 307; cf. B. Müller-Schauenburg, *Religiöse Erfahrung, Spiritualität und theologische Argumentation: Gotteslehre und Gottebenbildlichkeit bei Gregorios Palamas*, Suttgart 2011. Now it is to be asked whether the thirst for knowledge can be recognized as the driving motive of his systematic book.

385 R. Sinkewicz, Christian Theology and the Reneval of Philosophical and Scientific Studies in the Early Fourtenth Century: The *Capita 150* of Gregory Palamas, in: *Medieval Studies*, 48 (1986), 335–340 and 351; R. Sinkewicz, The Early Chapters of the *Capita 150*, in: *Saint Gregory Palamas, The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, ed. and transl. by R.E. Sinkewicz, Toronto 1988 (ed. Sinkewicz 1988), 4–15.

386 Palamas, Capita 150, 1, ed. Sinkewicz 1988, 82, 1–3.

387 Palamas, Capita 150, 17, ed. Sinkewicz 1988, 100, 2–9.

which by its nature is connected with the rational faculty, produces the manifold quantity of arts, sciences and knowledge, which God has given only to man.[388] Rationality, acting in indivisible unity with sensuality, is the ground of philosophizing, whose engine is the thirst for knowledge.[389]

9 Philosophy in Byzantium and Byzantine Philosophy

For years I have been in the habit of drawing a distinction between "philosophy in Byzantium" and "Byzantine philosophy." When I speak of "philosophy in Byzantium," I usually refer to the totality of all philosophical projects within Byzantine culture. By "Byzantine philosophy," I understand philosophical tendencies that differ from Western traditions mainly by placing a firmer emphasis on the dynamics of being. They raise to the primary subject of philosophical reflection, not the essence, the substance, the thing or the being in and for itself, but its activity, its effects and movements and, in this sense, its existence, through which its essence can be known. Eastern Christian intellectual culture first identifies actions and afterwards asks about the generator of these actions and its specificity. The dynamics of being, through which the view on the existent is formed, is the first to be understood. I consider this nuanced approach to the metaphysical core problematic as a specific contribution of the philosophical culture in Byzantium.[390]

10 Conclusion

In Byzantium, highly original and autonomous philosophizing can be observed. Although the touchstone for the mastery of philosophers may be theological issues, philosophical investigation into creation, that is, into contingent being, has its independency. Further, the projects of Byzantine philosophy

388 Palamas, Capita 150, 63, ed. Sinkewicz 1988, 156, 1–11.

389 Nikephorus Gregoras, for example, explains the φιλομάθεια respective πολυμάθεια as an essential characteristic of the philosophical mind—cf. D. Manolova, Nikephoros Gregoras' Philomathes and Phlorentius, in: Dialogues and debates from Late Antiquity to Late Bzyantium, eds. A. Cameron, N. Gaul, London 2017, 203–219.

390 Cf. G. Kapriev, Was hat die Philosophie mit der Theologie zu tun? Der Fall Byzanz, in: *Byzantine Theology and its Philosophical Background*, eds. A. Rigo, P. Ermilov, M. Trizio, Turnhout 2011, 4–16; G. Kapriev, Philosophy in Byzantium and Byzantine Philosophy, in: *The Ways of Byzantine Philosophy*, ed. M. Knežević, Alhambra, California 2015, 1–8.

described above will be primarily considered here. Despite all the diversity of philosophical platforms, conditioned by their respective historical periods, basic themes and principles can still be recognized. Presented in truly different modalities, with different emphases and positions, without any claim to essentiality, these themes and principles are found in most philosophical programs in Byzantium. The next section will discuss fundamental concepts and themes of this kind.

PART 2

Main Topics and Concepts

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CHAPTER 1

Teachings on the Energies

The doctrine of the powers and activities of essence is a philosophical tool valid for all philosophers in Byzantium, regardless of their philosophical orientation. It is a specific feature of philosophy in Byzantium, which exemplifies its originality in comparison with occidental medieval philosophical paradigms. The doctrine was constituted and explicated in the period between Athanasius of Alexandria and John Damascene.[1] It also gained intensive use as an explanatory tool in Byzantine speculative theology, conceived as a sublime part of the first philosophy. Disputes provoked over the course of the 20th century regarding the variant of the doctrine represented by Palamism obscure the fact that this doctrine had no firmly outlined, "essential" constitution. There is diversity of form in its appropriation and use, as each philosopher applied it according to the singularity of his own philosophy program.

Reference to the semantic stem of two words usually assumed to be synonyms—the Latin *res* and the Greek πρᾶγμα—can serve as an initial introduction to Byzantine teaching on energies. Both are translated as "thing," "object," "entity," but they are not unequivocally identical. While *res* primarily suggests objective or substantial singularity, πρᾶγμα means, above all, "deed," "something actual," "active," "exercising influence," "performed," lat. *facinus*. Πρᾶγμα is the concretum of abstractum πρᾶξις (practice). While *res* (abstractum: *realitas*, reality) denotes a vision of the world based on static self-determination, πρᾶγμα describes a world founded on dynamic interactions. While in principle the Latin tradition perceives reality through subjectively stable *res* (as "things-at-rest and regulated processes"[2]), the starting point for the Byzantine tradition is activity or, to use the Greek word—ἐνέργεια.

Πρᾶγμα is the most general designation of "object/thing." It is contrary to "expression" (φωνή). "Object/thing" is predicated on genera, species and individuals, on essences, but also characteristics (συμβεβηκότα).[3] "Object" does

1 Cf. D. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West. Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom*, Cambridge 2004, 153–220; the paragraphs related to the topic in G. Kapriev, *Philosophie in Byzanz*, Würzburg 2005, 21–149; J.-C. Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines: des origines à saint Jean Damascène*, Paris 2010, *passim*; D. Bradshaw, *Divine Energies and Divine Action: Exploring the Essence-Energies Distinction*, St. Paul, Minnesota 2023.

2 А. Райчев, К. Стойчев, *Време и нищо*, София 2023 [A. Rajtschev, K. Stoychev, *Time and Nothing*, Sofia 2023—Bulgarian], 249.

3 Johannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 6, in: *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, Bd. 1, ed. B. Kotter, Berlin 1969 (ed. Kotter 1), 64, 1–67, 124 (PG 94, 545C–548D).

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not correspond to "substance." All those things one could claim actually *are*, whether independently existing or not, are denoted by this term. "Objects" in the realm of creation are traditionally defined as formal-material, despite the ambiguous descriptions of matter-ὕλη.[4] Indeed, Damascene subdivides beings according to their association with matter. Only God is incorporeal and immaterial in the proper sense. Angels, demons and souls are deemed immaterial in relation to the body; but, considered in relation to the immaterial, i.e. to the divinity, they prove to be material. Animals, plants, minerals, and everything dealt with by physiology are unquestionably associated with matter.[5] Even in this instructive text, there is a noticeable overlap in the uses of "ὕλη" in conceptual terms for materiality, physical substantiality, and corporeality. Damascene refrains from defining the elements-στοιχεία, from which something initially arises and to which it ultimately decomposes, as matter, but without hesitating to call them "bodies." He defines origination and destruction as movements (with regard to transitions from non-being to being and from being to non-being) and growth and decay as movements of quantitative increase or decrease.[6]

The four elements (στοιχεῖα) are the foundation of the contingent. They are definitively formulated in the authoritative text of Nemesius of Emesa. In the elements, the smallest parts of the composition of bodies and the first and simple foundations of all bodies, the boundaries of qualities are manifested in terms of power and energy (ἄκραι αἱ ποιότητες δυνάμει καὶ ἐνεργείᾳ φαίνονται). The main characteristic of an element is that, unlike all other bodies, it possesses its qualities in the form of energy (κατ' ἐνέργειαν). All bodies arise from the gathering of the four elements.[7] Powers and energies form the basis of the elements themselves, which are the foundation of everything corporeal. Following practically the same pattern, Damascene tends to relate the thing (πρᾶγμα) and its definitions not so much to the formal-material difference and the structural effects arising from it as to action. Acting (ποιεῖν) and enduring (πάσχειν), he insists, are observed in all categories without exception. Each of them proves to be capable of acting and enduring.[8]

4 Cf. Iohannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 4; 8; 13; 19, in: ed. Kotter 1, 57, 6–58, 24; 69, 16–70, 23; 83, 6–11; 89, 7–90, 2 (PG 94, 537A; 553A; 576B; 585A).

5 Dialectica, 67, in: ed. Kotter 1, 137, 16–27 (PG 94, 672A).

6 Ibid., 68, in: ed. Kotter 1, 140, 2–141, 17 (PG 94, 673AB).

7 Nemesius Emesenus, De natura hominis, 5, in: PG 40, 613AB; 620B: Πάντα δὲ τὰ σώματα τὴν γένεσιν ἐκ τῆς συνόδου τῶν τεσσάρων τούτων στοιχείων ἔχει.

8 Iohannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 52, in: ed. Kotter 1, 123, 27–124, 33 (PG 94, 640D).

It should be noted that the tradition following Damascene employs the form-matter relationship as a central explanatory matrix relatively rarely. The Byzantines perceive reality as actuality. The progression of activity in any acting entity, whether human or non-human, can be described through two main types of activities: "causal" and "existential." This differentiation is paradigmatically grounded in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and its Hellenic and Byzantine interpretations.

1 The Teaching of Aristotle

In Book Θ of *Metaphysics*, Aristotle draws a distinction between types of speech about the essence (οὐσία) of each being: through categories and through the concepts of power (δύναμις) and activity (ἐνέργεια).[9] Both Latin and modern translations tend to express the pair δύναμις-ἐνέργεια as *potentia-actus* and, very often, as *possibilitas-actualitas*. Such translations tend to associate the terms with modal concepts, obscuring Aristotle's true intention. Aristotle defines δύναμις as a power exerting influence on something else and influenced by something else. The ability of any power to exert influence is designated as ἐνέργεια (energy, activitiy), which is initially defined as κίνησις (movement). Aristotle then distinguishes between two types of actions: movements and activities in the proper sense.[10] Movements have a beginning and an end; they have a limit (πέρας), but no final cause (τέλος). They are actions triggered by some specific external cause and cease when the cause is no longer operating. I designate movements as causal or instrumental activities.

Energies *par excellence* have a τέλος and are identical with the existence of the being (τὸ ὑπάρχειν τὸ πρᾶγμα). They are the manifestation of essence and its power, which is tied to the ultimate purpose of the essence. Therefore, Aristotle identifies activity/energy with entelechy (ἐντελέχεια).[11] Energy gives definition to life.[12] It is the existential action of essence, but energy does not have a substantial character. This kind of energy can be defined as "existential." It should be noted that essence coincides with its essential energy only in a conditional aspect. They are one and the same, but essence carries energy. For its part, energy is not essence, but belongs to essence: it is its existential action.

9 Aristotle, Metaphysics, IX, 1, 1045b32–1046a2.
10 Met. IX, 3, 1046b29–1047b2; IX, 8, 1049b8–10.
11 Met. IX, 6, 1048b22; IX, 8, 1050a7–10.
12 Met. IX, 8, 1050b1–2.

It is the existence of essence and its manifestation. Energy is not generated by some immediate "in order to," but pursues the existential goal as such—not some specific goal set by life circumstances. The network of energetic activities forms the reality of being and, in this sense, it is truly actual or active. Typologically speaking, the network is "woven" from two types of activities: those that have a limit and those that are unlimited, but have a predefined goal.

The theme is further developed by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In his discussion of pleasure, he unfolds an argument that draws additional distinctions between energy and movement. While energy is permanently complete, available in its entirety, movement is, by definition, incomplete at all times until reaching its end. In this regard, Aristotle explains that while movement always occurs in time and is connected with time, energy is totally and completely present at every moment. It is independent of the passage of time. Unlike movement, it has no components and is entirely present ἐν τῷ νῦν. According to Aristotle, the "now"-νῦν is not an interval of time or a part of time in the sense in which a point is part of a line. Energy bears the form or is identical with it. The form is a teleological structure, which is to remain independent of changes in time.[13]

These discussions culminate in Aristotle's reasoning about the prime mover. It is a necessary being that exists in actuality (ἐνεργείᾳ) in the sense that it is constantly active, a permanently actual principle (ἀρχή). Energy is its existence; it exists as energy. Its essence is a pure act, it coincides with its energy, its power (δύναμις) being unlimited and non-limitable (ἄπειρος). Its energy is its life, which is the best and eternal one. This essence is the most excellent because it is simple and exists according to energy (ἁπλῆ καὶ κατ' ἐνεργείαν). Aristotle emphasizes that "one" (ἕν) and "simple" are not one and the same because "one" denotes a certain measure (μέτρον) while "simple" denotes a specific state (πῶς ἔχον).[14] Here, Aristotle's position is brought to full clarity. Essence is an actual being and as such refers to no higher principle. It is the first principle itself, manifesting itself and its identity in an act/energy, constantly preceded by its essential power.[15]

13 Nic. Eth. X, 4. 1174a17–28; 1174b8–9. Cf. Cf. D. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West. Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom*, Cambridge 2004, 8–12.

14 Met. XII, 7. 1072a30–1073a11.

15 Cf. J.-C. Larchet, La notion d' «énergie» dans la philosophie d'Aristote, in: *Philotheus*, 5 (2005), 194–196; J.-C. Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines. Des origines à saint Jean Damascène*, Paris 2010, 27–37.

2 The Interpretation of the Theory of Energies by Martin Heidegger

This semantic level of being is missing or at least significantly neglected in all historically realized forms of reception of this Aristotelian topic in the Western tradition. However, there is one notable exception. Through a careful reading of Book IX of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Martin Heidegger demonstrates in his lectures during the winter semester of 1931/32 that the usual common translation of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια as "potentiality" and "actuality" does not adequately reproduce Aristotle's intention because the two terms should be considered as belonging to the modal categories. For Aristotle, the question of δύναμις and ἐνέργεια is not a question related to these categories, but to being as such.[16] It is about the power and activity of being itself.[17] Power in its proper sense is not understood categorically, but as a basic mode of being: being and non-being in the sense of the bearable (δυνατόν) and the unbearable (ἀδύνατον), respectively, of the powerful and the powerless. Power is ability, potency, the quality of being able, which manifests the different types of being able.[18]

Heidegger repeatedly emphasizes the Aristotelian distinction between δύναμις κατὰ κίνησιν and δύναμις in the proper sense (δύναμις ἐπὶ πλέον), but does not elaborate on the second theme in any greater detail. Δύναμις κατὰ κίνησιν is defined as "Leistenkönnen" (ability to achieve), and ἐνέργεια κατὰ κίνησιν, respectively, as achievement-oriented activity. The energies are the accessible in actuality (das handgreiflich Wirkliche).[19] It is emphasized that the way of explaining the origin of the concept of "power" based on the data of subjective experience is not only inadequate, but also capable of misplacing the entire issue in a direction that may lead to a complete deviation from the real question.[20] Δύναμις is interpreted as ἀρχή (origin, principle), as something from which something emerges: first power (πρώτη δύναμις) is the outline of essence (der Grundriss des Wesens).[21]

Ἐνεργεῖν, in turn, means to be in action (not just to be real).[22] To observe powers and energies is to look at the constitution of the being of respective beings as such.[23] They belong to the ontological structure of the respec-

16 M. Heidegger, Aristoteles, Metaphysik Θ, 1–5, Von Wesen und Wirklichkeit der Kraft, in: M. Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 33, Frankfurt am Main 1990, 9.
17 Ibid., 50.
18 Ibid., 65.
19 Ibid., 78.
20 Ibid., 74.
21 Ibid., 78 and 90.
22 Ibid., 167.
23 Ibid., 120.

tive realm of being and co-constitute it.[24] Against this background, Heidegger attacks "the seeming self-understanding of causality."[25] With Aristotle, we do not encounter powers in terms of their causal relation as causes; "power" is not a "concept derived from causality."[26] There is still no relationship between cause and effect.[27] Heidegger concludes his lectures with the statement that Aristotle's theory expresses a philosophical knowledge of antiquity, "a knowledge that remains underestimated and misunderstood in today's philosophy."[28]

3 Hellenic Reception

Aristotle's theme, however, was continued through its reception in the Greek-speaking Hellenic world. After several dramatic transitions, Andronicus of Rhodes published and commented on the part of Aristotle's work known to us in the second half of the first century BC. It should be noted that Hellenic and Christian receptions of this work proceeded almost in parallel. After sporadic mentions by the immediate successors of Aristotle as well as individual representatives of other philosophical directions (among them Philon of Alexandria,[29] who makes structural use of terms such as essence, force and energy), the concept "ἐνέργεια" finds systematic use in Alexander of Aphrodisias.

Pagan Neoplatonic reception draws a distinction between essence and energy, as well as between the energy immanent to essence and energy directed outwards from the essence, accepting that essence can only be known through its energies. It recognizes that beings can participate in each other through their energies, and participation is interpreted as synergy. It distinguishes between eternal and temporal energies (depending on the nature and status of essences) and accepts the existence of beings possessing both eternal and temporal energies (especially human souls). Even among the Neoplatonists the concept of "energy" is a key term through which divine presence in the world and human participation in that presence are explained.

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24 Ibid., 117.

25 Ibid., 77.

26 Ibid., 79.

27 Ibid., 83.

28 Ibid., 219. Cf. in more recent times J. Beere, *Doing and Being. An Interpretation of Aristotle's Metaphysics Theta*, Oxford 2009.

29 Cf. J.-C. Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines. Des origines à saint Jean Damascène*, Paris 2010, 65–81; D. Bradshaw, *Divine Energies and Divine Action. Exploring the Essence-Energies Distinction*, St. Paul, Minnesota 2023, 185–187.

In the early 3rd century Alexander of Aphrodisias first places Aristotle's concept of energy back in the central field of philosophical reflection. He applies Aristotle's conception of energies primarily in his teaching on the intellect, utilizing both the interpretation of energy as actuality in opposition to potentiality and the understanding of energy as effectiveness, reconciling the two interpretations. In the teaching of Plotinus (c. 205–270), the concept of energies already plays a decisive role. He draws a distinction between two kinds of energy proper to each essence: inherent to essence (τῆς οὐσίας) and external, expressed by the essence to the outside (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας). The former is defined through Aristotle's principle that essence, in the sense of "form," is energy. It is conceived as actuality, distinct from the potentiality of matter. While this first kind of energy coincides with essence, the second type of energy is a manifestation of the first kind *ad extra*. Through these energies the being-creating productivity of the respective essence is realized. The model of the "two activities" explains, among other things, the creation of the Soul from the *Nous* and of the *Nous* from the One, as well as the natural order of the soul, and hence the return of the lower to the higher hypostases. The One expresses itself as energy. This concept corresponds to Aristotle's notion of the first mover as pure energy. The One that dwells above every essence (ἐπέκεινα οὐσίας) can be defined as the supreme essence, existing in complete activity and being the origin of everything else. From the same perspective, the circumstance that the One is also beyond all energy (ἐπέκεινα καὶ ἐνεργείας) does not exclude the position that it has energy and is energy: it concerns the transcendent and transcending "first energy." The difference between essence and energy is even more sharply asserted by Porphyry, the immediate continuator of Plotinus. He emphasizes that energies indicate the character—divine, mortal or more one than the other—of the essence. Neoplatonic developments in the East are dominated, not by Plotinus and Porphyry, but by Iamblichus (around 240–around 325). In *De mysteriis* he emplois the triad "essence-power-energy" and through it presents the hierarchy of super-natural beings. The decisive boundary lies between the gods, who are good by their essence, and souls, who are good by participation. Between these are the demons, heroes, and demigods. When it comes to the energies of all these beings, Iamblichus insists that energy actualizes and expresses power-δύναμις, which in turn follows and manifests the essence. Therefore, every kind of being is recognizable by its energies. In this context, he also unfolds his doctrine of participation. Participation in the divine, which he calls "deification", is the participation of human energies in the energies of the gods. Iamblichus distinguishes three levels or stages of this participation. At the first level, called "simple participation" (μετουσία ψιλή), the god uses the human as an instrument, while at the level of communion-

κοινωνία a presence in the divine is already to be asserted: The participating human is involved in the divine as an outsider. The highest level differs principally from the previous two because here the human holds and expresses divine energy as their own. Iamblichus calls this level "unification" (ἕνωσις). In all cases, the divine energy in which humans can participate is conceived of as "grace," thereby excluding the automatism of participation. It always concerns participation in the realm of energies and not of essences, and Iamblichus never identifies essence with energy. Energy reveals the essence to some extent, but does not coincide with it.[30]

The teachings of Iamblichus achieved great popularity. During the reign of Emperor Julian (361–364), his doctrine became part of the official ideology of the time. Iamblichus exercised a formative influence on Plutarch of Athens († 432), the restorer of the so-caled Athenian school, the center of the last creative development in Hellenic Neoplatonism. The school flourished not so much under Plutarch and his successor Syrianus, but under Proclus (412–485), the third leader of the school.

In his most famous work, *Elementa theologica*, the concept of "energy" appears primarily in the explanation of the dynamic relationship between "the one" and "the many." Concerning the question of the relation of beings to the Good, Proclus emphasizes that the being closer to the object of aspiration is superior to the being that requires a cause separate from the Good, and therefore receives the perfection of its existence and energy from outside.[31] In this way, the relation between the existence of the being and its energy is postulated in a provisional way. Proclus clearly explains the relation between essence and its energy. With this, the way in which the energy depends on essence is indicated: the energy emanates from essence:[32] energy is proper to every existing essence.[33]

The ability of a being to be productive in the realm of being is associated with its effective δύναμις and the corresponding ἐνέργεια, which entails an emanative process, so that the productive being undergoes no change in its essence.[34] Furthermore, the important role of the concept of beingness participation should be noted, whereby Proclus distinguishes between beings that do not allow par-

30 Cf. D. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West. Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom*, Cambridge 2004, 68–143; J.-C. Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines. Des origines à saint Jean Damascène*, Paris 2010, 42–61.

31 Elementa theologica, 9.

32 Elementa theologica, 44.

33 Elementa theologica, 83.

34 Elementa theologica, 27.

ticipation and those that allow participation within the emanative process. Participation is conceived as synergy, i.e., as interaction of the energies of the One (which is productive and causative as τέλος of everything) and the subordinate causes, on the one hand, and of the participating and given for participation, on the other.[35]

Proclus describes the gradation of essences and their energies, constituted by their different proximity to the higher good. He states that every temporal entity has temporal being and temporal energy,[36] while the eternal being has an eternal essence and eternal energy.[37] Everything that can be called "primordially eternal" is participatory in every respect in eternity—both in essence and in energy. Both the essence and energy of everything primordially eternal are eternal.[38] It should be added that Proclus also acknowledges beings with eternal essence that possess both eternal and temporal energy simultaneously.[39] Here he mentions souls primarily.[40]

Proclus emphasizes that every acting being posseses active power (δύναμις ἐνεργετική), and explains that every actuality and energy emanates from the internal δύναμις, whereby they, the power and the energy, are non-corporeal even when in bodies because they are unlimited.[41] He calls this power "perfect" which, through its energies, makes something else perfect.[42] Divine providence, *Nous* and goodness are defined as divine energies.[43] The being, subordinated to the eternal, always connects its permanence (with regard to its emanation) with the permanence of the immovable (with regard to its energy).[44]

In summary, it can be said that, in the teachings of Iamblichus and Proclus, numerous elements of the doctrine of energies are revealed, which are not found in Aristotle, but are present in the Greek-speaking Christian tradition. Proclus' teachings entered the Eastern Christian world through the work of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, as well as through the unmediated reception of Proclus, especially in the 11th and 12th centuries.

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35 Elementa theologica, 63.
36 Elementa theologica, 50.
37 Elementa theologica, 51.
38 Elementa theologica, 104.
39 Elementa theologica, 106.
40 Elementa theologica, 191; 201.
41 Elementa theologica, 79–80; 95.
42 Elementa theologica, 120.
43 Elementa theologica, 120.
44 Elementa theologica, 76.

However, it should be recalled that the doctrine of energies is recognizable in the realm of Christian philosophy much earlier. It is plausible to argue that Neoplatonic and Christian receptions of this doctrine run in parallel in time. Another question is to what extent and how a field of mutual influence between the two intellectual currents emerged. Nowadays, there is a firm conviction that the doctrine of energies can be traced back to the roots of Greek-speaking Christian philosophy.

4 Beginning of Christian Reception of the Doctrine of Energies

David Bradshaw has shown that the problematic, especially the relation "power-energy", can be observed in the New Testament, primarily in the epistles of the Apostle Paul. The terms ἐνέργεια and ἐνεργεῖν (as already—sporadically—in the Old Testament with regard to God and man[45]) are stated (only in *activum*) in relation to supernatural beings (God, Holy Spirit, Christ, demons, Satan). These beings activate (ἐνεργεῖσθαι) creaturely beings, primarily humans. With regard to human beings, the adverb is used both in *activum* and in *passivum*. In the case of humans, there is synergy between human and divine or demonic powers and energies, and the connection between force and energy is clearly explained. Paul demonsrates that divine energy interacts with creation, which cannot be said of essence in any way.[46]

Instances of using the philosophical concept of energies are found in some early Greek-speaking Christian authors, including Justin Martyr and Philosopher, Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch, Irenaeus of Lyons, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen.[47] The Christian intellectual explosion in the course of the 4th century prompted the systematization and intensification of this doctrine.

45 Cf. J.-C. Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines. Des origines à saint Jean Damascène*, Paris 2010, 83–86.

46 D. Bradshaw, The Divine Energies in the New Testament, in: *St. Vladimir Theological Quarterly*, 47 (2003), 383–412. Cf. J.-C. Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines. Des origines à saint Jean Damascène*, Paris 2010, 86–93; D. Bradshaw, *Divine Energies and Divine Action. Exploring the Essence-Energies Distinction*, St. Paul, Minnesota 2023, 27–56.

47 Cf. J.-C. Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines. Des origines à saint Jean Damascène*, Paris 2010, 95–113; D. Bradshaw, *Divine Energies and Divine Action. Exploring the Essence-Energies Distinction*, St. Paul, Minnesota 2023, 187–189.

5 The Doctrine of Energies in Christian Thinkers of the 4th Century

5.1 *Athanasius of Alexandria*

Teachings about the essential energies, especially concerning the energies of the divine essence were used continuously during and after the 4th century. Even Athanasius of Alexandria, emphasizing the absolute simplicity of the divine being, defines the difference between the being and the effect of God and establishes a clear distinction between the essence of God and divine goodness, divine providence, and divine will, which he interprets as the power of God περὶ αὐτόν, from which divine manifestations arise (divine economy, effects and deeds of God). In a later, much-cited passage, he affirms faith in the Trinity with its irrevocable distinction of the hypostases and their perfect unity. He stresses the beginninglessness and timelessness of divine presence, emphasizing the unity of essence, power, energy, and everything contemplated around the essence (καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν).[48] Grace is also interpreted as the common unified activity or energy of the divine essence of the three hypostases, which is manifested from the Father through the Son in the Spirit. Among the many examples of divine energies common to the three entities, Athanasius mentions light, wisdom, life. The theological perspective (internal Trinitarian communication through energy) and the economic perspective (the manifestation of this energy outside the Trinity) are closely linked and continuous. The being of God has absolute and ontological priority over the activity and will of God. There are two different kinds of names that can be used in relation to God. One group of names refers to God's acts or actions—that is, to his will and counsel—and the other to the essence and being of God. These two groups of names should be formally and consistently distinguished. It is more than just a logical or mental distinction. It implies a difference within divine reality itself.[49]

5.2 *The Cappadocians*

With the contribution of the Cappadocians, the doctrine of energies undergoes signifcant development. Basil the Great explains, in a model-building way, that the essence of anything, including the created, cannot be known precisely or fully in itself, but is expressed solely through its properties, that is, its ener-

48 Athanasius Alexandrinus, Sermo in annuntiationem sanctissimae dominae nostrae deiparae, in: PG 28, 917C–920A.

49 G. Florovsky, The Concept of Creation in Saint Athanasius, in: *Studia Patristica*, 4 (1962), 54; D. Bradshaw, *Divine Energies and Divine Action. Exploring the Essence-Energies Distinction*, St. Paul, Minnesota 2023, 189–191.

gies.[50] Every nature or essence has its powers and energies, through which its identity is affirmed.[51] Energy is originally inherent to the essence, not to the hypostases that contain it.[52] This applies also to God and his essence. That which is seen around God (περὶ αὐτόν), which is also uncreated, differs from the divine essence itself. It is identified with the common actions (ἐνέργειαι) of the essence of the three hypostases, which are manifested in the economic order and revealed through it.[53] Gregory of Nyssa directly states that the name "Divinity" (θεότης) denotes not the divine nature (φύσις), but energy (ἐνέργειαν σημαίνειν).[54] The multiplicity of energies does not question the simplicity of the divine nature. He emphasizes that the divine energies are not contingent acts of divinity but are God Himself, who expresses Himself through a dimension that can be known and named. Like his power, the energy of God is unlimited and infinite.[55] Along with this, he notes that God does not direct all his energy towards creation but into "analogy," i.e. in view of the abilities of creation to receive it.[56] While the divine essence remains perfectly unknown, God does not remain completely unknowable.[57] The divine essence has no spatial or temporal extension (διάστημα) and limit (πέρας). Therefore it cannot be named. The manifest actions of this essence are knowable. The names of God are the names of divine acts. The names of the divine hypostases and their properties and relations, given to us by revelation, are exceptions. The names of the Lord such as "shepherd," "king," "healer," "way," "door," "source," "bread," etc., however, denote not the divine nature but the divine energy with its manifold character, which reaches us and is known by us. Names that signify the multitude of manifestations of grace, kindness, wisdom, providence, etc., that descend to us belong to this order as well.[58] They are names of divine powers and energies proper to the divine essence.[59] We cannot know the eternal, infinite and simple God in Himself (οὐκ ἐκ τῶν κατ' αὐτὸν). We form a vague and incomplete idea of what God is in Himself through what is around God (ἐκ τῶν περὶ αὐτὸν).[60] Energies are diverse, and essence is simple (αἱ μέν ἐνέργειαι ποικίλαι, ἡ δὲ οὐσία ἁπλῆ),

50 Basilius Magnus, Homiliae IX in Hexaemeron, 1, 8 et 11, in: PG 29, 20C–21A; 25A–28B.
51 Gregory Nyssenus, De oratione dominica, III, in: PG 44, 1156D–1157A.
52 Gregorius Nyssenus, *Ad Ablabium* quod non sint tres die, in: PG 45, 128A.
53 Gregory Nyssenus, De oratione dominica, III, in: PG 44, 1160A.
54 Gregorius Nyssenus, *Ad Ablabium* quod non sint tres die, in: PG 45, 124D.
55 Gregory Nazianzenus, Oratio 34, 10, in: PG 36, 249C.
56 Gregory Nyssenus, Contra Eunomium, II, in: PG 45, 520BD.
57 Gregory Nazianzenus, Oratio 28, 4, in: PG 36, 29C–31A.
58 Basilius Magnus, De Spiritu Sancto, VIII, 17, in: PG 32, 96D–97A.
59 Gregory Nyssenus, Contra Eunomium, II, in: PG 45, 564A–565A.
60 Gregory Nazianzenus, Orationes, 30, 17, in: PG 36, 125B; Orationes, 45, 3, in: PG 36, 625C.

Basil insists, but we say that we know our God through his energies, without pretending to approach his essence. Divine energies descend upon us, but His essence remains incomprehensible to us.[61] Due to its limitations, reason cannot even grasp energies in their entirety simultaneously.[62]

Similar to the Cappadocians, the understanding of John Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria, especially with his teaching on the omnipresence of divine energy in creation and its penetration into everything, strongly influenced Maximus the Confessor.[63]

The conviction that energies lead to true knowledge of the essences continues in the tradition. At the end of the 7th century, Anastasius of Sinai in his Ὁδηγός (*Viae Dux*) II, 4, for example, asserts, through a citation attributed to Gregory of Nyssa, that the true λόγος of the actual energies of essences makes it possible to attain the definition of essences (τῶν οὐσιῶν). By οὐσία, he unequivocally understands something acting, insisting that, through the etymology of nouns, one can arrive at a conclusion about a specific action denoting the named.[64]

Already at the end of the 4th century, Nemesius of Emesa demonstrates, through a note in his seminal work *De natura hominis*, that the doctrine of essential energies has become a conventional philosophical tool, allowing for various applications. In one place, he defines energy as effective motion corresponding to nature (κίνησις δραστικὴ κατὰ φύσιν). By "acting," he understands self-moving, i.e., that which moves itself. Here, a noteworthy distinction is

61 Basilius Magnus, Epistulae, 234, 1. 27–31, in: Basil, Letters 186–248, ed. R.J. Deferrari, Cambridge, Mass. 1953, 372.

62 Cf. G. Martzelos, *Ουσία και ενέργειαι του Θεού κατά τον Μέγαν Βασίλειον. Συμβολή εις την ιστορικοδογματικήν διερεύνησιν της περί ουσίας και ενεργειών του Θεού διδασκαλίας της Ορθοδόξου Εκκλησίας*, Θεσσαλονίκη ²1993, *passim*; P. Kalligas, Basil of Caesarea on the Semantics of Proper Names, in: *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources*, ed. K. Ierodiakonou, Oxford 2002, 31–47; Г.В. Флоровский, *Восточные отцы IV века*, Париж 1931 (репр.: Москва 1992), 70–74, 85–86; A. Torrance, Precedents for Palamas' essence-energies theology in the Cappadocian Fathers, in: *Vigilae Christianae*, 63 (2009), 47–70.J.-C. Larchet, La théologie des énergies divines: l'enjeu, les difficultés et les perspectives du dialogue entre catholiques et orthodoxes, in: *Logos*, 50 (2009), 378–383; J.-C. Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines. Des origines à saint Jean Damascène*, Paris 2010, 145–232; D. Bradshaw, The Divine Processions and the Divine Energies, in: *The Dionysian Traditions* (Rencontres de Philosophie Médiévale 23), ed. G. Kapriev, Turnhout 2021, 79–82; G. Kapriev, *Philosophie in Byzanz*, Würzburg 2005 21–31.

63 J.-C. Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines. Des origines à saint Jean Damascène*, Paris 2010, 233–288.

64 K.-H. Uthemann, Anastasios Sinaites, in: *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition*, I/1, ed. C.G. Conticello, Turnhout 2015, 618–619.

drawn: energy is movement according to nature, but πάθος (passion) is movement contrary to nature (παρὰ φύσιν), i.e., energy that moves against nature. The movements of the irrational soul are called πάθος in both senses: they arise from the soul's affective capacity (παθητκόν) and are thus a kind of energy; however, if they are immoderate and contrary to nature, they are not energies but πάθη.[65]

These stated positions undergo further significant developments.

6 Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite

It has already been mentioned that Proclean ideas enter Christian philosophy, including Proclus' doctrine of energies, through the work of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite. However, Dionysius deliberately distances himself from many of Proclus' basic theses. First and foremost, this relates to the doctrine of emanation. Dionysius leaves no doubt that the world is created by one God, the Creator, according to his own will and from nothing. For this reason, being, essence, essential power, etc. are not conveyed through any emanative process. The inner life of God remains completely incomprehensible and unknowable. The non-participatory God reveals Himself outwardly through His powers, in which creation can participate.[66] In this usage, Alexander Golitzin notes, δύναμις is practically synonymous with "procession" (πρόοδος), as it paves the way for the actual contact of the Uncreated with creation.[67] These "processions" are God, revealed-as-active, as opposed to ὑπερούσιος οὐσία, i.e. God as transcendent and beyond all names.[68] Existence is determined as the sphere of action of energies and their respective influence, and it is not the existence of levels of being, but of the individually existent.

When contemplating God, Dionysius is entirely prepared to assert that God is indeed the first principle and the primary cause of everything. Dionysian

65 Nemesius Emesenus, De natura hominis, 16, in: PG 40, 673B–676A.

66 *De divinis nominibus* (DN), 11, 6, in: *Corpus Dionysiacum I*, ed. B.R. Suchla, Berlin-New York 1990 (ed. Suchla), 222, 13–223, 3 (PG 3, 956A). Cf. G. Florovsky, Creation and Creaturehood, in: *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky, Vol. III: Creation and Redemption*, Belmont, Massachusetts 1976, 66.

67 A. Golitzin, *Et Introibo Ad Altare Dei. The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita, with Special Reference to Its Predecessors in the Eastern Christian Tradition*, Thessalonike 1994, 59.

68 D. Bradshaw, The Divine Processions and the Divine Energies, in: *The Dionysian Traditions* (Rencontres de Philosophie Médiévale 23), ed. G. Kapriev, Turnhout, 2021, 83–84. Cf. DN, 5, 1 (ed. Suchla, 180, 28–33; PG 3, 816B).

κυριαρχία is interpreted by his earrliest Greek-speaking commentators precisely in this sense.[69] Moreover, they distinguish between the names of divine supremacy and those termed ἀιτιολογικά, which are related to creation and its causation.[70] The inner activity-ἐνέργεια of the divine essence precedes the external creative action-ἐνέργεια of God and the divine οἰκονομία.[71] Therefore, causality is a function of the relation between οὐσία (essence), δύναμις (power), and ἐνέργεια (energy). Against this background, Dionysius argues that the divine name ὄν (Being) takes second place and is preceded by the name ἀγαθόν (Good). Once again emphasizing that he has no intention of elucidating the superessential essence, but rather of praising the procession (πρόοδος) of the θεαρχικὴ οὐσιαρχία in all that exists, he points out that goodness-ἀγαθότης has a broader scope than being. The divine name "Being" extends over existence, surpassing it, while the τἀγαθοῦ θεωνυμία, revealing all processions (πρόοδοι) of the cause of everything, extends over both being and non-being (καὶ εἰς τὰ ὄντα καὶ εἰς τὰ οὐκ ὄντα ἐκτείνεται) and surpasses them.[72]

This perspective is valid not only for God but for all independent beings. Dionysius unequivocally states that all divine minds are divided according to their super-cosmic λόγος into three, namely essence, power, and energy (οἱ θεῖοι νόες εἰς οὐσίαν καὶ δύναμιν καὶ ἐνέργεια [διῄρηνται]).[73] To this he adds the symptomatic question of demons, who by nature are not evil either: since, being evil, they do not harm themselves but others, what do they lose with respect to others: essence, power, or energy?[74] Furthermore, the same applies not only to νόες and δαίμονες but to everything that exists, forming the hierarchy of the cosmos. Among the beings (ἐν τοῖς οὖσιν) there is nothing that does not partake in the Good; the same applies to the dissolution of powers and energies, Dionysius adds.[75] The term "energy" is further used to denote all activities of human life; and it is with the synergy of energy and the existence of Christ and man that

69 De coelesti hierarchia (CH), 8, 1, in *Corpus Dionysiacum II*, eds. G. Heil, A.M. Ritter, Berlin-New York 1991, 33, 4 (PG 3, 237C). See also the gloss on this point in PG 4, 177D.

70 PG 4, 216A.

71 Cf. И. Христов, Πρόνοια и Σοφία в дискурса на енергиите според гръцките схолии към Ареопагитския корпус, in: *Sine arte scientia nihil est. Изследвания в чест на проф. дфн Олег Георгиев*, съст. Г. Каприев, София 2019 [I. Christov, Providence and Wisdom in the Discourse of Energies According to the Greek Scholia on the Corpus Areopagiticum, in: *Sine arte scientia nihil est. Studies in Honor of Prof. DSc Oleg Georgiev*, ed. G. Kapriev, Sofia 2019—Bulgarian], 179–182.

72 DN, 5, 1, ed. Suchla, 180, 8–181, 4 (PG 3, 816B).

73 CH, 11, 2, ed. Heil/Ritter, 41, 22–42 2 (PG 3, 284D).

74 DN, 4, 23, ed. Suchla, 170. 15–17 (PG 3, 724C).

75 DN, 4, 23, ed. Suchla, 170, 25–171, 1 (PG 3, 725A).

the deification (θέωσις) of man is explained.[76] In parallel, he draws a distinction between ἕξις (predisposition) and ἐνέργεια (activity).[77] The three concepts (οὐσία, δύναμις, ἐνέργεια) are used in a strict mutual relationship by Dionysius at least nine times, and they are mentioned in many other places in a contextual connection. This usage is even more intense in the authors of the scholia. The early Byzantine tradition considers the doctrine of the relation between οὐσία-δύναμις-ἐνέργεια as a universally valid element of the philosophical and speculative-theological apparatus, whereby this element is inseparably linked with the *Corpus Areopaciticum* and is understood as the fundamental tenet of Dionysius' teaching.[78] This scheme acquires a definitive significance with Maximus the Confessor and John Damascene.

7 Maximus the Confessor

The doctrine of energies arrives at a comprehensive Christian interpretation and takes its place at the foundation of Eastern Christian thought in the works of Maximus the Confessor. He states: "There is no being that lacks natural energy. The holy fathers have openly said that no nature can neither be nor be known without this essential energy … According to the fathers, any being that has lost what constitutes it according to nature can no longer be what it was."[79]

The Byzantine tradition regards the concepts of essence (οὐσία) and nature (φύσις) as identical and interprets them as the common form of a specific being, represented in multiple individuals. The true manifestation of every essence, both finite and infinite, is its constitutive power (συστατικὴ δύναμις) and its natural energy (φυσικὴ ἐνέργεια). Maximus the Confessor insists that it is impossible to affirm an essence while denying its constitutive energy. Essence is "self-moving" (αὐτοκίνητος) because it is expressed by its energy and exists through it. Natural energy characterizes the essence initially and immediately; nature could not exist without its constitutive movement.[80] This is its "sole and

76 *De ecclesisastica hierarchia* (EH), 5, 7, 3; l, 2, 6, ed. Heil/Ritter, 111, 19–21 (PG 3, 512A; ed. Heil/Ritter, 77, 17–23). Cf. J.-C. Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines. Des origines à saint Jean Damascène*, Paris 2010, 292.

77 DN, 4, 23, ed. Suchla, 171, 7 (PG 3, 725A).

78 Cf. G. Kapriev, Gibt es die richtige Dionysius-Interpretation?, in: *The Dionysian Traditions* (Rencontres de Philosophie Médiévale 23), ed. G. Kapriev, Turnhout 2021, 374–375.

79 Cf. Relatio motionis, 5, in: *Maximus the Confessor and his Companions. Documents from Exile*, eds. P. Allen, B. Neil, Oxford 2002, 62.

80 Maximus Confessor, Ambigua ad Thomam (AmbTh), 5, in: PG 91, 1052B.

true demonstration (or: proof)" (μόνη τε καὶ ἀληθής ἐστιν ἀπόδειξις), because, as Maximus continues the thesis of the Cappadocians, essence (every essence, without exception) is inherently unknowable and subject to knowledge only through its power and energy. Natural energy is species-forming movement, the most general of all properties, and without it, only non-being is possible, in which there is neither movement nor existence.[81]

Maximus establishes the triad "essence—power—energy" as fundamental for every existing being.[82] He defines this triad as the generic triadic principle of being (τριττὸς λόγος τοῦ εἶναι).[83] In this triad, essence is the origin (ἀρχή), power-δύναμις, which is of the essence and in the essence (ἀπό τῆς οὐσίας καὶ ἐν τῇ οὐσίᾳ),[84] is the middle (μεσότες). It is determined as "species-forming movement." It is regarded as inherent in both essence and energy. Power is understood as the "womb" of movement and energy: it precedes energy.[85] Energy, on the other hand, is the actual essential action in its final direction, culmination and goal (τέλος).[86] However, the λόγος of essential energy is the limit and constitutive determinant (ὅρος) of the whole of nature.[87] Energy expresses itself in two modes.

Remaining inherent to action itself, energy is the inherent being-movement of the essence; it is the essence itself. This applies to both the divine essence and its powers and energies. The internally acting energies are designated as the "eternal manifestation of God from Him to Himself."[88] Neither they nor the essential powers that "fulfill the essence" (συμπληρωτικάς τῆς οὐσίας), are absolutely identical with the essence.[89] Insofar as the energies are transitive, going outward and directed to other essences, it expresses the essence outwardly, whereby certain aspects of the inner essential life remain unexpressed.[90] It is

81 AmbTh, 5, in: PG 91, 1048A.

82 Cf. Ambigua ad Iohannem (AmbIo), 10, in: PG 91, 1184D–1185A; AmbIo, 20, in: PG 91, 1237B. Engl. transl. N. Constas in: Maximos the Confessor, The Ambigua, Cambridge, Mass.–London 2014.

83 AmbIo, 67, in: PG 91, 1400AB.

84 Opuscula theologica et polemica (ThPol), 1, in: PG 91, 33B.

85 Cf. J.-C. Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines. Des origines à saint Jean Damascène*, Paris 2010, 333–338.

86 Cf. V. Karayiannis, *Maxime le Confesseur: essence et énergies de Dieu*, Paris 1993, 53.

87 AmbTh, 2, in: PG 91, 1037CD; AmbTh, 5, in: PG 91, 1048A, 1057B; Disputatio cum Pyrrho (Pyrrh.), in: PG 91, 345D, 348A; ThPol, 1, in: PG 91, 36B.

88 T.T. Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor. A Study of his Metaphysical Principles*, Oslo 1999, 161; J.-C. Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines. Des origines à saint Jean Damascène*, Paris 2010, 412–414.

89 AmbIo, 24, in: PG 91, 1261C.

90 In his interpretation of the teaching of Maximus the Confessor T.T. Tollefsen insists on the

not about two different energies, but about two aspects of one and the same, of the one energy of the essence. These two aspects relate to each other in the perspective of the "logos—tropos" axis.[91]

In his reflection on divine transitive energy, Maximus distinguishes between two kinds of "works of God" (ἔργα Θεοῦ). He establishes the fundamental distinction between the works "which God has begun to do" ([τὰ ἔργα] ὧν ἤρξατο ποιῆσαι or ὧν ἤρξατο τῆς γενέσεως ὁ Θεός) and the works "which God has not begun to do" ([τὰ ἔργα] ὧν οὐκ ἤρξατο ποιῆσαι).[92] Here, not only the latter,[93] but also the former concept do not refer to the created. The first type is formed by the creative energies of God. It constitutes activities in a temporal mode (χρονικῶς), in which all beings and the various essences of beings are indeed participating—all ὄντα that are preceded by non-being and have not been.[94] God creates by virtue of the creative and encompassing (ποιητικὴ καὶ περιεκτική) energy of his will.[95] However, the world is not an emanation of the divine essence and is not in natural unity with God. Maximus summarily notes that this energy is the action through which the Creator brings forth something external to Him. He creates something that is not essentially identical to Him. The creative man creates from present matter, relying on the arts he masters thanks to his knowledge.[96] Unlike humans, God creates from nothing and does not require any acquired demiurgic skill or knowledge. Only in his creation does God act outside Himself as a cause, creating a new subject, a "new sujet."[97] That which is created by God Maximus calls "the beings which are after God."[98]

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distinction between the internal and external activity/energy of God as a suitable interpretative tool. The internal activity that works in God, about which in itself we can know nothing, represents the basis of the "second" potentiality (the force) that expresses the second activity, the energies *ad extra*—T.T. Tollefsen, *The Christian Metaphysics of St. Maximus the Confessor: Creation, World-Order, and Redemption*, Turnhout 2023, 150–156.

91 Cf. J.-C. Larchet, *La divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris 1996, 132; V. Karayiannis, *Maxime le Confesseur: essence et énergies de Dieu*, Paris 1993, 190–195; P. Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua of St. Maximus the Confessor and his Refutation of Origenism*, Roma 1955, 111, 122–123.

92 Capita theologica et oeconomica, 1, 48, in: PG 90, 1100C.

93 Cf. T.T. Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor. A Study of his Metaphysical Principles*, Oslo 1999, 161; T.T. Tollefsen, *The Christian Metaphysics of St. Maximus the Confessor: Creation, World-Order, and Redemption*, Turnhout 2023, 157.

94 Capita theologica et oeconomica, 1, 48, in: PG 90, 1100CD.

95 AmbIo, 67, in: PG 91, 1401B.

96 AmbIo, 26, in: PG 91, 1268AB.

97 V. Lossky, *Essai sur la théologie mystique de l'Église d'Orient*, Paris 1944, 85–86; N.A. Matsoukas, *La vie en Dieu selon Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris 1994, 64–65.

98 Cf. J.-C. Larchet, La conception maximienne des énergies et des *logoi* et la théorie platonicienne des idées, in: *Philotheus*, 4 (2004), 277.

In this context another question arises. The definition of power as "species-forming movement" is unproblematic in relation to the created, but not so with regard to God. There is no species for God, no formative movement, and nothing in God is in potency or possibility. However, speaking of God, Maximus the Confessor employs the concepts of "power" and "will" synonymously. Will (θέλημα) is able to assume the position of power as an intermediate term in the triad "essence—power—energy." The same is claimed, however, for the human being. Energy presupposes will and the will has its destiny and limit in the energy that stems from the will, being neither its synonym nor its external effect nor a realized object.[99] God's will, knowledge, wisdom, etc., are interpreted not as aspects of the divine essence but as powers, the power of God respectively. The will is in coordination with God's knowledge and wisdom and is the power through which creation is brought about. Therefore, it is permissible to assert simultaneously that the divine essence undergoes no change due to the creative act. The whole of creation in its manifoldness receives its being and existence, not ad hoc, but according to the one plan, knowledge, and will of God at the appropriate and preordained moment (τετελεσμένος καιρός).[100] The will of God is inherent to the essence; it is always active and at the same time always related to something "other." There is no reason to speak of an inner-Trinitarian directed will. The one and indivisible will of the Trinity is turned "outward," towards the "world."[101]

The other kind of energy is the existential manifestation of the essence, the external presence of its existence. It is the "standing around the essence" that expresses the essence itself without being the essence in itself. With regard to the divine nature, this is eternal divine goodness, which is uncreated and stands beyond any contingent nature and apart from all times.[102] That which stands or exists around God is divine, non-created, and eternal.

When it comes to essential divine energy in its extra-essential guise, Maximus speaks of God's "works" (ἔργα) which have never begun. They do not come into being in time, nor are they in any way bound by time. They are a manifestation of the Divinity, existing independently of the presence or absence

99 Cf. ThPol, 1, in: PG 91, 33B–36A; Pyrrh., in: PG 91, 348A, 352B. P. Piret, *Le Christ et la Trinité selon Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris 1983, 339–341, 355, 377.

100 AmbIo, 42, in: PG 91, 1328BD.

101 Г.В. Флоровский, *Восточные отцы V–VIII веков*, Париж 1933 (*repr.* Москва 1992) [G.W. Florovsky, *Byzantine Fathers of the 5th–8th Centuries*, Paris 1933 (reprint Moscow 1992)], 205.

102 AmbIo, 10, in: PG 91, 1141AB. Cf. J.-C. Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines. Des origines à saint Jean Damascène*, Paris 2010, 407–411.

of the created, meaning that they have no economic motive and admit only grace to participation with themselves. Maximus asserts: Everything immortal and immortality itself, everything living and life itself, everything holy and holiness itself, everything virtuous and virtue itself, everything good and goodness itself, everything existing and existence itself—all of these are obviously God's works. Some [of God's works], however, have a beginning in time because there was a period in which they did not exist. Others have no beginning in time because there was no time when there was no virtue, goodness, holiness, and immortality. These things, which have no beginning in time, are that which "is contemplated as essentially around Him" and are distinguished from divine works that require time for their realization and in which creatures are naturally participative.[103] Participation in existential divine energy is the non-causal connection of creatures to the energy that produced their being. Creation, and especially humanity, is capable of participating in the divine energies.[104]

Not only the divine essence but every essence has its causal and existential powers and energies. Maximus makes another important remark in this context. He insists that for those who use their nature against nature, against its own law, nature itself is diminished. Not because nature itself is diminished in its *logos*, but because such people—through their perverted will and thought—have condemned themselves not to have all the natural powers. They have nature, but not the full power of that nature. In their case, there is a diminuation in the intensity of the natural being. This arbitrary limitation of one's own natural powers is precisely a turning towards non-being.[105]

8 John Damascene

John Damascene synthesizes the features of the doctrine of energies delineated previously. He formulates it as follows: Activity-ἐνέργεια is the essential movement that cannot be lacking in any actually existing nature. It is the natural movement inherently present (ἔμφυτος) in every essence. By activities (ἐνέργειαι), he defines all powers and movements (cognitive/γνωστικαί, vital/ζωτικαί, physical/φυσικαί, and creative/τεχνικαί) naturally belonging to the essence. Energy, as a result (αποτέλεσμα) of natural powers, is the constitutive and essen-

103 Cf. Capita theologica et oeconomica, 1, 48–50, in: PG 90, 1100C–1101B.

104 Cf. J.-C. Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines. Des origines à saint Jean Damascène*, Paris 2010, 386–391.

105 Amb10, 10, in: PG 91, 1164C.

tial movement of nature. Without manifest energy, nature cannot exist or be known.[106] The association of power with movement is motivated by the fact that Damascene understands the δύναμις not as a simple potentiality, but as potentiality in action.[107] Natural power and energy are primarily inherent to the essence, not to the hypostases: "We call the wills and the energies natural, not hypostatic."[108] Causal energy is clearly differentiated from existential energy. Divine existential action, which is a manifestation of divine being, is broader than God's specific creative plans and his creative activity.[109] Concerning humans, the first and true energy of their nature that brings natural power (δύναμις) into actuality is self-determination, i.e., rational and free life.[110] The soul, which is entirely connected to the body and encompasses it, acts with its energies through it.[111] Damascene reflects on participation in divine being in this context. It is not just some automatic impregnation with divine energy but a gift of grace. Regarding humans, their participation in divine energy is also an act of will: it corresponds to the capacity and receptivity of nature and hypostasis, as well as the quality of freedom of will in each individual.[112]

Regarding the Trinity, with its identical nature and therefore identical essential power and energy[113] which endures περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν,[114] Damascene explains that the "τόπος" of the non-material and ineffable God is called that which is more fully participative in His energy and grace.[115] Invisible by nature, God becomes visible through his energies.[116] God is known by humans through his energies in the world, and the names of God refer to the energies, not to the essence of God.[117] Damascene emphatically explains the two natural energies in Christ: this duality of natures necessarily yields up the assertion that the

106 De fide orthodoxa (F.O.), II, 23; III, 15, in: PG 94, 949AB, 1048A, 1056C.

107 J.-C. Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines. Des origines à saint Jean Damascène*, Paris 2010, 425–426.

108 F.O. III, 14, in: PG 94, 1036A.

109 Cf. S. Markov, *Die metaphysische Synthese des Johannes von Damaskus. Historische Zusammenhänge und Strukturtransformationen*, Leiden–Boston 2015, 122.

110 F.O. II, 23; II, 27, in: PG 94, 949A–952B; 960D–961A.

111 F.O. I, 13, in: PG 94, 853A.

112 S. Markov, *Die metaphysische Synthese des Johannes von Damaskus. Historische Zusammenhänge und Strukturtransformationen*, Leiden–Boston 2015, 128.

113 F.O. I, 8, in: PG 94, 809A.

114 F.O. I, 10, in: PG 94, 840A.

115 F.O. I, 13, in: PG 94, 852B.

116 F.O. I, 13, in: PG 94, 856B.

117 Cf. J.-C. Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines. Des origines à saint Jean Damascène*, Paris 2010, 436–438.

natural energies in Christ are two—divine and human (ἔχειν … ἐνεργείας δύο φυσικάς, θείαν τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνην).[118] The diversity of natures presupposes diversity of energies. The equality of natures implies the equality of energies, and the equality of energies implies the equality of natures. Individuals with the same nature have the same energy. In the hypostatic union of Christ, there is an interaction of the two energies based on mutual exchange (ἀντίδοσις).[119] The identity (ταυτότης) of one hypostasis composed of two natures ensures the unity of the interaction of the two natural energies. But this fact does not remove the essential difference (οὐσιώδης διαφορά) between the energies. The acts (πράξεις) of one person belong continuously to both forms (μορφαί). They are carried out inseparabily (ἀχωρίστως). One must never confuse them but understand, through the quality of works (ἐκ τῆς τῶν ἔργων ποιότητος), which of them belongs to which form.[120]

John Damascene delineates the distinction between ἐνέργεια, ἐνεργητικόν, ἐνέργημα and ἐνεργών in this context. While energy constitutes the essential activity of nature, the active-ἐνεργητικόν is nature itself, from which energy results. Ἐνέργημα refers to what is achieved through energy while the active-ἐνεργών is that which makes use of energy, namely the hypostasis. He notes that "ἐνέργεια" and "ἐνέργημα" are used synonymously in everyday speech, rather like "creation" and "created."[121]

9 An Intermediate Balance

In the last paragraph of his book,[122] as well as in a separate article,[123] Jean-Claude Larchet summarizes the various stages of elaboration and application of the different constitutive elements of the doctrine of energies in the Byzantine tradition up to John Damascene. The definitive explanation of the inseparable triad "essence/nature-force-energy," drawing the distinction between creative and essential energies, is crucial. Every existiing essence possesses its own powers and energies. These powers and energies are characterized

118 F.O. III, 13, in: PG 94, 1033A.

119 F.O. III, 19, in: PG 94, 1080A.

120 F.O., III, 15, in: PG 94, 1052B, 1053B–1056A, 1060A.

121 F.O. III, 15, in: PG 94, 1048A.

122 J.-C. Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines. Des origines à saint Jean Damascène*, Paris 2010, 455–459.

123 J.-C. Larchet, La théologie des énergies divines des origines à saint Jean Damascène, in: *The Wedding Feast*, ed. P. Ladouceur, Montreal 2010, 29–34.

as non-hypostatic πράγματα, belonging to and surrounding the essence. Their existence does not question the unity of the essence. This circumstance is confirmed both by the nature of the contingent being and by God and his simple essence. The energies of the created are created, while the energies of God are uncreated and eternal. The energies are intrinsic to essence and not to hypostasis. They act both internally, within the essence, and externally in diverse ways. Participation in essence is possible only through its energies. They express the essence and the essence is known through them. The names of God used by humans are names of God's energies. God's energies manifest in the world and are omnipresent. Participation in them proceeds according to different measures, depending on both the condition of the nature and hypostasis of the respective being, as well as the will of God. The essential divine energy is identified with divine grace. The person who is filled with divine energy lives the life of God through synergy: they become deified.

It can be concluded that during this period, the paradigm of teachings about the energies has been established. It cannot be argued that a strictly systematized model exists. Rather, it should be seen as the creation of a conceptual framework within which the structuring of theoretical apparatuses takes place. The unfolding of the doctrine and its diverse usage becomes evident in later Byzantine thinkers.

10 The Doctrine of Energies and Western Philosophical Thought

The teaching remained unknown to occidental intellectual culture. Even John Scotus Eriugena, the translator of works by Dionysius Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor, demonstrates a way to transpose them into Latin within the context of interpreting his *causae primordiales*, which he presents as *primordiales substantiae*, existing *circa Deum*.[124] The divine nature is conceived exclusively as a cause (*una causa per se existentem in tribus causis per se subsistentibus*),[125] as the beginning of every causality.[126] Divine wisdom, divine life etc. are *causae primordiales*.[127] Goodness is defined as the first name of God and, simultaneously, as the first creative cause.[128] Eriugena insists that the consistency of

124 Eriugena, De divisione naturae, 2, 2, in: PL 122, 528D.
125 Ibid., 2, 29, in: PL 122, 546AB.
126 Ibid., 2, 30, in: PL 122, 600A; 3, 2, in: PL 122, 627CD.
127 Ibid., 2, 36, in: PL 122, 616C–617A.
128 Ibid., 3, 2, in: PL 122, 627CD.

every nature falls under the three terms οὐσία, δύναμις, ἐνέργεια.[129] *Essentia, virtus, operatio naturalis* are indissoluble and indivisible in every nature, whether corporeal or not.[130] In his interpretation of the Trinity, nevertheless, he does not relate them to the divine essence, but to the three divine persons and their *proprietates*: essence corresponds to the substance of the Father, *virtus* to the substance of the Son, and energy to the substance of the Holy Spirit.[131] The structure of the human soul is also elucidated through these concepts. The essence of the soul is the intellect, the λόγος (reason) corresponds to the δύναμις. The third part is described as διάνοια *et* ἐνέργεια and is identified with *sensus*, which is put in an analogous relationship with *operatio*.[132] Eriugena subsumes the relationship οὐσία-δύναμις-ἐνέργεια under the common denominator of substantiality and interprets it from the perspective of the doctrine of causality.[133]

Both the contemporaries of Eriugena and later Western thinkers were even less familiar with the doctrine of energies and the corresponding interpretation of Dionysius. Hugh of Saint Victor declares in his commentary on Dionysius's *Celestial Hierarchy*, that the entire hierarchy of creations participates in a single causal form, the source and cause of everything. But nothing can participate in the divine *potestas*.[134] "*Virtus nostra*," identified with "*capacitas nostra*"[135] is directly determined as "*possibilitas nostra*."[136] All members of the hierarchy imitate God according to their respective capacities.[137] Hugh's approach is exemplified in his interpretation of the eleventh chapter: *Quare omnes coelestes essentiae communiter virtutes coelestis nominator* (Why all heavenly essences are called by the common name "heavenly powers"). Dionysius states that all divine intellects (νόες) are divided into three: οὐσία, δύναμις, ἐνέργεια, which Eriugena translates respectively as *essentia, virtus, operatio*.[138] Hugh interprets them as properties: *non totum in partes, sed natura discernitur in proprietates*, which are present in every *spiritus*.[139] Hugh's exegesis establishes causality as

129 Ibid., 2, 23, in: PL 122, 567A.
130 Ibid., 1, 48, in: PL 122, 490AB.
131 Ibid., 1, 48, in: PL 122, 568C.
132 Ibid., 2, 23, in: PL 122, 570BC.
133 Cf. G. Kapriev, *Eodem sensu utentes*? Die Energienlehre der „Griechen" und die *causae primordiales* Eriugenas, in: *Tübingener Theologische Quartalschrift*, 4 (2000), 289–307.
134 Hugo de S. Victore, In hierarchiam coelestem, 1, in: PL 175, 928CD.
135 Ibid., 2, in: PL 175, 938A.
136 Ibid., 2, in: PL 175, 956B.
137 Ibid., 4, in: PL 175, 992CD.
138 Ibid., 11, in: PL 175, 1105A.
139 Ibid., 8, in: PL 175, 1106C.

the dominant interpretive principle. The *virtutes* and *operationes* are reduced to the level of the individual, and to individual possibility and reality respectively.

This model is also detectable in Robert Grosseteste.[140] The natural *operationes*, the *passiones et actiones*, are interpreted as *proprietates* proper to each individual thing, which are both caused and causative.[141] The interpretation of the *potentiae naturales* belonging to each individual thing[142] tends toward their identification with "subjective faculties or capacities that are outside and transferred to objects."[143] From this perspective, the detailed thematization of causality and, first and foremost, the efficacy of the *causa omnium* is evident for Grosseteste.[144]

He also follows Hugh in his commentary on the *Celestial Hierarchy*.[145] At the "touchstone" (CH, XI, 2),[146] essence, power and energy are transferred entirely into the realm of the individual, but Grossesteste does not reduce the latter two to the possibilities and the realities of the substance. However, he explains, these three, by which the intelligences *dividuntur*, are not *partes constitutive essentialiter adinvicem altere. Ut videtur idem sunt subiecto, diversa autem ratione*, he concludes.[147] After this ontological equalization of the three constitutive dimensions of being, he undertakes argumentative steps to justify the admissibility of the equivocal use of "*virtus*" so that both the eponymous stage of the "*taxiarchia*" and the remaining stages of the celestial hierarchy may be designated by this concept. The οὐσία-δύναμις-ἐνέργεια perspective is thus closed.

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140 J. McEvoy, *Mystical Theology: The Glosses by Thomas Gallus and the Commentary of Robert Grosseteste on "De Mystica Theologia"*, Leuven 2003, 126.

141 Ibid., 90 et 96.

142 Ibid., 112. Grosseteste favors translating the word "*dynamis*" as *"potentia*," while, he notes, others render it by "*virtus*"—cf. ibid., 114.

143 Which Heidegger explains as an inauthentic understanding of the Aristotelian δύναμις: M. Heidegger, Aristoteles, Metaphysik Θ, 1–5. Von Wesen und Wirklichkeit der Kraft, in M. Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 33, Frankfurt am Main 1990, 73.

144 Cf. J. McEvoy, *Mystical Theology: The Glosses by Thomas Gallus and the Commentary of Robert Grosseteste on "De Mystica Theologia"*, Leuven 2003, 104 ff.

145 *Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Lincolniensis Versio Caelestis Hierarchiae Pseudo-Dionysii Areopagitae, cum Scholiis ex Graeco Sumptis necnon Commentariis Notulisque eiusdem Lincolniensis* (Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaeualis 268), eds. D.A. Lawell, J. McEvoy, J.S. McQuade, Turnhout 2015.

146 In his translation the passage reads: "*… sed quia utique in tria divisi sunt ea que secundum ipsos supermundana racione omnes divini intellectus, in substantiam, in virtutem et operationem …*"—*Roberti Grosseteste Versio Caelestis Hierarchiae*, 218, 3–219, 1.

147 *Roberti Grosseteste Versio Caelestis Hierarchiae*, 220, 49–55.

The Victorians and Grosseteste set the basic coordinates for the occidental reading of Dionysius, in which certain themes of Dionysius are overly accentuated while others remain in the shadows. Within this framework, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas develop extensive commentaries that give Dionysius the profile of a primary guarantor of scholastic transcendental philosophy.

Albert explains that Dionysius is concerned only with those names of God which imply a causal relationship to things. These names designate God in the proper sense, insofar as He is a cause in respect of the attributes by which things proceed from Him as from a univocal cause. Since God is the first cause and the cause of everything, he acts solely *per suam essentiam*, which is his essential goodness. Goodness is unambiguously interpreted causally. The divine *effluxiones* and *processiones* are the *prima fundamenta* of every being, determined by quantity and variability.[148]

In Thomas' interpretation, too, the God envisaged as *De divinis nominibus* is unreservedly conceived as *prima causa*, in particular as the cause of *maxime communia*, i.e. of the subject of metaphysics. God causes being and diffuses goodness because he is essentially being and goodness. Causality is the exhaustive center of Thomas' interpretation of Dionysius, in which his "systematizing intervention" can be observed. For Thomas, the Dionysian dynamic of being is based in the universal causality (*universalis causalitas*) of divine goodness. The radiating power of light in Dionysius is found in both Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas in the form of the metaphysics of causality and the corresponding metaphysics of participation. Here, goodness precisely articulates the causal relation of God to his creation.[149]

Andreas Speer argues that Dionysius is the author who, above all, inspired Thomas Aquinas' consistent reading of Aristotle. The thesis is mainly proven through Thomas' epistemology and anthropology.[150] Among other things, it is an apt confirmation of the fact that, during the period of university scholasti-

148 Cf. e.g. J.A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and Transcendental Thought. From Philip the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Suarez*, Leiden-Boston 2012, 187 et 191; A. Speer, Lichtkausalität. Zum Verhältnis von dionysischer Lichttheologie und Metaphysik bei Albertus Magnus und Thomas von Aquin, in: *Die Dionysios-Rezeption im Mittelalter*, eds. T. Boiadjiev, G. Kapriev, A. Speer, Turnhout 2000, 347–348.

149 Cf. e.g. J.A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and Transcendental Thought*, Leiden-Boston 2012, 264–266: A. Speer, Lichtkausalität. Zum Verhältnis von dionysischer Lichttheologie und Metaphysik bei Albertus Magnus und Thomas von Aquin, 360 und 366–369.

150 A. Speer, Reading Aristotle through Dionysius. New Perspectives on Thomas Aquinas' Epistemology, in: *The Dionysian Traditions* (Rencontres de Philosophie Médiévale 23), ed. G. Kapriev, Turnhout 2021, 233–252.

cism, Dionysius was already being traditionally read from the fundamental perspective of causality and substantiality outlined by Hugh of St. Victor, Robert Grosseteste and their immediate continuators.

Despite the diversity of Western receptions of Dionysius, there are no deviations from these basic positions. Let us mention here the symptomatic explanation of Meister Eckhart who, in his *Prologus in opus propositionum* (n. 8), validates the assertion that "Only God is good in the proper sense" by simultaneously referring to the Gospel of Luke ("No one is good but God alone"–18:19); Dionysius Areopagite who asserts that the first name of God is the Good; and Proclus who, in *Elementatio theologica*, says that the principle and first cause of everything that exists is the Good.[151] He emphasizes the causal character of the Good and firmly connects it with the *causa finalis*.[152] Even Nicholas of Cusa, who distances himself from the scholastic tradition, does not mention the οὐσία-δύναμις-ἐνέργεια teaching.[153]

There was also no discussion of this doctrine at the Council of Ferrara-Florence. Silvester Syropoulos, the chronicler of the council, testifies that, from the very beginning and in order to avoid chaos in the debate, Emperor John VIII Palaeologos explicitly and strictly prohibited spokesmen from the Eastern churches using this doctrine in their arguments. All present, including Marcus of Ephesus, obeyed the commandment steadfastly. They did so even when the Dominican Andreas Chrysoberges, Archbishop of Rhodes, directly raised the question of the relationship between essence and energies.[154] Chrysoberges, an ethnic Greek, was the author of a book dedicated to this issue and addressed to Bessarion,[155] which also did not gain any popularity. The doctrine of the natural

151 Cf. J.A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and Transcendental Thought*, Leiden-Boston 2012, 342.

152 Cf. J.A. Aertsen, More Than One Eckhart? The Parisian Eckhart and the 'Opus tripartitum' —The Need for a More Homogeneous Picture of His Thought, in: *Contemplation and Philosophy: Scholastic and Mystical Modes of Medieval Philosophical Thought. A tribute to Kent Emery, Jr.*, ed. R. Hofmeister Pich, A. Speer, Leiden-Boston 2018, 535.

153 Cf. H.G. Senger, *Ludus sapientiae. Studien zum Werk und zur Wirkungsgeschichte des Nikolaus von Kues*, Leiden–Boston–Köln 2002, 228–254; J.A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and Transcendental Thought*, Leiden-Boston 2012, 553–567.

154 Silvestros Syropoulos, Ἀπομνημονεύματα, V, 38–39, in: *Les «Mémoires» du grand ecclésiarque de l'Église de Constantinople Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le Concile de Florence (1438–1439)*, ed. V. Laurent, Rome 1971, 272, 10–20.

155 Andreae Rhodiensis Archiepiscopi, de divina essentia et operatione ad sanctissimum Dominum Bessarionem, Metropolitam Nicaeae, ex commentariis beatissimi Thomae apodictica explicatio, ed. E. Candal, in: *Orienatalia Christiana Periodica*, 4 (1938), 344–371.

energies inherently belonging to every essence remained unknown to the West until the first decades of the 20th century and has not been fully understood until today.[156]

11 Photius of Constantinople

There is no nature without energy (οὐκ ἔστι φύσις ἀνενέργητος), asserts Photios, and the divine nature does not exempt itself from this rule.[157] In recognizing the one energy of the divine nature, the one nature of the Godhead is also recognized.[158] The perfect triad is manifested in the divine essence, power and energy, completely and identically inherent in each hypostasis (and not in varying degrees).[159] Photios considers the character of this manifestation by means of reflection on the thesis of divine omnipresence: How might it be claimed that God is in everything? If we are not afraid of the depth of theological truths, he asserts, we must say that God is in everything through energy and essence. But how can he be in everything according to his essence? In precisely the same way as he is omnipresent through energy (κατὰ ἐνέργειαν), the answer goes. Everything else is either potential (δυνάμει) or actual (ἐνέργειᾳ). The divine, however, is always present as ἐνέργεια: actuality or activity, because it does not ascend from imperfection to perfection, nor is its selfhood (αὐτούσιον) something different from its self-activity (αὐτοενέργεια). Where the Divine is energy, there is also essence. But if the Divine is in everything in essence, why does this not lead to a universal joint co-existence (συνουσίωσις) and nature, and for what reason is a total common hypostasis of everything not realized? The answer lies in the ambiguity of the expression "being present through essence" (κατ' οὐσίαν ὑπάρχειν). On the one hand, it expresses the idea that something exists in another so that it is part of the composite and complements the hypostasis in its fullness (as the soul and body are). On the other hand, the expression can still mean that something is in another in such a way that it is neither a part of its essence nor changes its own essential properties, so that the peculiarities of the two natures become a common property and one nature does not receive its completion from the other. In this case, the being together of the two natures is decisive for the existence and preservation of the independent

156 Cf. G. Kapriev, Gibt es die richtige Dionysius-Interpretation?, in: *The Dionysian Traditions* (Rencontres de Philosophie Médiévale 23), ed. G. Kapriev, Turnhout 2021, 364–374.

157 Photius, Amphilochiae (Amph.), 195, in: PG 101, 932B.

158 Amph., 181, in: PG 101, 896AB.

159 Amph., 181, in: PG 101, 892C.

hypostasis of one of them (like the art of the helmsman on a ship). God is connected with created beings, not by being one of them, but in economic relations with them. Just as it is said to be wisdom and super-wisdom, to be essence in its own right and super-essential, to be goodness itself and super-goodness, so it is said to exist in everything and beyond everything.[160] The presence of the divine essence and power outside the Trinity is realized solely in and through the animating, sustaining, enlightening, and manifest natural energy of the Godhead.[161]

12 Michael Psellus

Is there any basis for speaking of a continuity flowing from the time of the Cappadocians through the thinkers of the seventh and eighth centuries and the Byzantine classicism of the ninth and tenth centuries? If so, should some "essential," unified form be presumed or is there instead a diversity of forms of assimilation and usage? How do things stand in the eleventh century? An answer can be sought through Michael Psellus' *De omnifaria doctruna* (Διδασκαλία παντοδαπή). Styled as a didactic-pedagogical text, it gained great significance and became a much-used book.[162] Moreover, Psellus is often classified in the anthropocentric line of Byzantine philosophical thought and even taken as its emblem.

The concepts of "power" and "energy" do not find a place among the dozens of philosophical and theological terms specifically discussed in the work. However, for Psellus, it is beyond doubt that—as is demonstrated by the example of the soul—every specific essence has its powers and energies and is definitively recognized through them.[163] At the end of the first chapter,[164] it is noted that God is one principle, one nature, one deity, one form (μορφή), as well as one essence and power (οὐσία καὶ δύναμις). Later,[165] providence is defined as the first and highest among all types of knowledge and as divine energy. At the end of the thirteenth chapter, it is stated that the entire nature of God

160 Amph., 75, in: PG 101, 465C–468A.
161 Amph., 182, in: PG 101, 900AB.
162 P. Schreiner, Die enzyklopädische Idee in Byzanz, in: *Encyclopedic Trends in Byzantium?*, eds. P. v. Deun, C. Macé, Leuven 2011, 19 et 22.
163 Michael Psellus, De omnifaria doctrina, 66, in: *Michael Psellus. De omnifaria doctrina*, ed. L.G. Westerink, Utrecht 1948 (ed. Westerink), 44, 8–9.
164 Ibid., 1, ed. Westerink, 17, 11–12.
165 Ibid., 94, ed. Westerink, 54, 2–3.

co-operates (συνενεργεῖται) in the hypostasis of Christ and not just some part of it.[166] Symptomatically, the concepts first appear as an explanatory means, without any specialized definition, in connection with Christ's two natural wills in the fourteenth chapter.[167] Psellus explains the one energy of God through the consubstantiality of the divine persons. The same applies to the human energy of Christ, which stems from his human nature and his unity with us. In due course Psellus emphasizes the ways in which the essence, power and energy of the soul differ from one another: they are the three faces of the ψυχογονία. The essence of the one being is something different; existence, harmony, the idea, power and energy, as well as the *eidos* that results from them, are something different. The same applies, for example, to fire with its essence, power and energy, he adds.[168] The example shows that this differentiation is valid for every being. The essential power of salt is also discussed in this sense.[169] Semantically Psellus also distinguishes the use of the terms δύναμις and ἐνέργεια in this context from their modal-categorial use in the sense of "possible" (δυνάμει) and "actual" (ἐνεργείᾳ).[170]

In his response to the question Τίς ὁ Θεός, who is God, Psellus explains:[171] The nature-φύσις of God and his power-δύναμις are incomparable to the nature and power of any other being. They are unlimited (ἄπειροι) in their principle and their goal as well as in every respect. The power of God is without beginning, endless and eternal (ἄναρχος τε καὶ ἀτελεύσητος καὶ αἰώνιος). In the next chapter the question is to be answered whether and how the divine (τὸ θεῖον) is infinite (ἄπειρον).[172] The whole existent being (πᾶν τὸ ὄντως ὄν), the first premise here states, is not infinite, neither in quantity (πλῆθος) nor size (μέγεθος), but only in its power (δύναμις). God is not a quantity, however, but the One par excellence (κυρίως ἕν). He has no size and is bodiless. His activity-ἐνέργεια is not limited by any boundary, and all his energies and powers are infinite and inexhaustible.[173]

The concept of essential energy also plays a role in explaining the intellect-νοῦς. Every intellect has a perpetual (αἰώνια) essence, power and activity. The intellect understands (νοεῖ) everything at once. Because it is immovabile, it does

166 Ibid., 13, ed. Westerink, 23, 12–13.
167 Ibid., 14, ed. Westerink, 23, 10–13.
168 Ibid., 52, ed. Westerink, 38, 2–6.
169 Ibid., 180, ed. Westerink, 90, 11–12.
170 Ibid., 174, ed. Westerink, 87, 2–5.
171 Ibid., 15, ed. Westerink, 23, 2–24, 13.
172 Ibid., 16, ed. Westerink, 24, 2–10.
173 Ibid., 72, ed. Westerink, 46, 2–12.

not stand either in its essence, power or energy within the measure of time.[174] Thanks to its participation in the intellect, the soul is noetic, Psellus' reflection continues. But the intellect is νοερός by its essence, while the soul is so by participation (κατὰ μέθεξιν) in the intellect.[175] In his reflection on everlastingness and time (περὶ αἰῶνος καὶ χρόνου), Psellus remarks: the incorporeal being has an everlasting essence and energy, like the *nous*. For it, the essence is immovable and the energy immutable. Heaven is essentialy everlasting, but it is subject (κείμενος) to time in its motion. The body has both essence and energy temporally, in time, ἔγχρονος. The soul is everlasting by its essence, Psellus repeatedly emphasizes, but by its energy it participates (μετέχει) in time. It does not have all the νοήματα within itself at the same time, but it passes (μεταβαίνει) from one thought to another.[176] The relationship οὐσία-δύναμις-ἐνέργεια is used as an explanatory tool in interpreting issues relating to will.[177]

Psellus distinguishes sharply enough between energy and movement. Once set in motion he mentions the πράγματα, which grow, change, and are driven. Movements are correspondingly αὔξεσις (growth), φορά (carrying), the γένεσις. Principally following Aristotle from Book IX of *Metaphysics*,[178] to which he explicitly refers, he does not equate κίνησις (motion) and ἐνέργεια (activity) in their proper sense, although both initially do so. Movement is an ἐνέργεια of the time-related πρᾶγμα. It can be neither ἀρχή nor τέλος but rather mediates between them. The principle of οἰκοδομήσεις is neither movement nor movable. This applies to the goal as well. The movement occupies its place of being between them.[179] The fact that the movement cannot be ἀρχή and τέλος, but has a limit in time, which sets a deadline for both its beginning and its end, definitively distinguishes it from essential energy.

Psellus lays down the principles and causes at the foundation of his system. True knowledge is knowledge of principles. It is knowledge about the reasons for a being, no matter if it belongs to the realm of νοητά or αἰσθητά.[180] Moreover, the majority of the topics in *De omnifaria doctrina* exclusively concern the interpretation of οἰκονομία and its phenomena. It goes without saying that the problem of causality comes first and is discussed independently. However,

174 Ibid., 23, ed. Westerink, p. 27, 2–12.
175 Cap. 28–30, Westerink, 29–30.
176 Ibid., 107, ed. Westerink, 59, 2–12.
177 Ibid., 62–63, ed. Westerink, 42, 1–12.
178 Arist. Metaph. IX, 3, 1046b29–1047b2; IX, 8, 1049b8–10.
179 Psellus, De omnifaria doctrina, 107, ed. Westerink, 59, 3–12.
180 Cf. D. Walter, *Michael Psellus: Christliche Philosophie in Byzanz*, Berlin–Boston 2018, 143–144.

it should be noted that Psellus also understands causality as ultimately derived from the activity of the essential power and energy of God. The universal key in this context is the axiom that the εἶδος of every creature has its origin-γένεσις in ἄπειρον (infinity) but begins to be cosmicaly present in the completion of time-καιρός, as Psellus emphatically notes with regard to human existence.[181] Here lies the basis for the priority of eternal essential power and energy over the economic causal action of God, which forms the foundation of all subsequent causality. For this reason, man, who in theory ascends and thereby imitates God (ὁ ἄνθρωπος μιμούμενος τὸν θειὸν), can ultimately recognize—naturally, spiritually, noetically, and supernaturally—the principles and the causes of everything due to the effect of the twofold divine ἐνέργεια, through which God is in a contemplative position with regard to the whole (ἐν θεωριᾳ τῶν ὅλων ἐστί), knowing the principle (λόγος) of every creation and exercising providence (πρόνοια) over everything beneath Him.[182] Psellus' work testifies that, according to him, causality is not a linear function of the relationship οὐσία-δύναμις-ἐνέργεια. Identifying the principles and causes along with their respective correlations reveals their broad autonomy.[183]

The concepts of οὐσία, δύναμις, and ἐνέργεια are not specifically defined and problematized in the pseudo-propaedeutic *De omnifaria doctrina*. For Psellus, their relationship is a self-understood technical means of explanation. In this regard, he remains faithful to tradition. Alongside the examination of essence in connection with categories and συμβεβηκότα, characteristics and properties, the doctrine of essential powers and energies was evidently necessary and, in this sense, was even a commonplace interpretive perspective on essence for all philosophical lines throughout the entire Byzantine period. Or rather it was viewed as an unquestionable *locus communis* for anyone with philosophical schooling.

13 Nicetas from Maroneia

One attractive demonstration of this state of affairs is provided by the six fictitious dialogues on the procession of the Holy Spirit (Περὶ τῆς ἐκπορεύσεως τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος), the only securely attributed work of Nicetas from Maroneia,

181 Psellus, De omnifaria doctrina, 20, ed. Westerink, p. 26, 11–13.

182 Ibid., 72, ed. Westerink, 46, 5–12.

183 Cf. G. Kapriev, The Teaching of the Energies in *De omnifaria doctrina* of Michael Psellus, in: *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai Theologia Orthodoxa, 66/1* (2021), Thematic Issue: Michael Psellus (1018–1081), ed. F. Lauritzen, 104–112.

the metropolitan of Thessaloniki who died around 1145.[184] In his text, Nicetas prompts his "Greek" and "Latin" interlocutors to present and discuss their positions. A central element in the "Latin" argumentation surprises the connoisseur of the intellectual culture of that time.

In the first dialogue, the "Greek" questions the "Latin" model of the procession of the Holy Spirit because, to him, it seems to compromise the simplicity of the Trinity. The response of the "Latin" is a remarkable one: Composition (σύνθεσις) is not present everywhere diversity (ποικιλία) and difference (διάκρισις) are observed. Indeed, every essence (οὐσία) has around it (περὶ αὐτήν) both power (δύναμις) and energy (ἐνέργεια), but it does not follow that simplicity should be called "composite." There is no energy without power, nor is there essence without the power of acting (τοῦ ἐνεργεῖν δύναμις). This applies to all essences, including the simplest among them, the divine: it is not correct, therefore, to attribute composition to it simply because there is power and energy around it (περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν). The same thing (πρᾶγμα) exists, consisting, if one may say so, of essence, power, and energy, and therefore reason distinguishes essence from power and power from energy.[185] Again, with respect to

184 Until today, there has been no unified edition of the work. Joseph Hergenröther published the general prologue, the first Λόγος and excerpts from the remaining dialogues in *Patrologia Graeca*—PG 139, 169–222. Nicola Festa published between 1912 and 1915 three other dialogues: the second, third, and fourth—N. Festa (ed., in collaborazione con A. Palmieri), Nicétas de Maronée (ou de Thessalonique): Λόγοι διάφοροι πρὸς διάλογον ἐσχηματισμένοι περὶ τῆς ἐκπορεύσεως τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος (β'-δ') [Various Discourses Formulated for Dialogue on the Procession of the Holy Spirit (Books II–IV)], in: *Bessarione. Rivista di studi orientali*, 28 (1912), 93–107; 29 (1913), 104–113 et 295–315; 30 (1914), 55–75 et 243–259; 31 (1915), 239–246. Martin Jugie inncludes frargments from all dialogues in his book on Eastern Christians—M. Jugie, *Theologia dogmatica christianorum orientalium ab ecclesia dissidentium II*, Paris 1933, 313–326. There is mention of a dissertation that is supposed to contain the fifth and sixth dialogues; however, it is currently inaccessible to me—C. Giorgetti, *Niceta di Maronea e i suoi dialoghi sulla processione dello Spirito Santo anche dal Figlio*, Roma 1965. The secondary literature on Nicetas is also not abundant. Information rarely goes beyond the initial presentation by Andronikos K. Demetracopoulos (A. Δημητρακοπούλος, Ορθόδοξος Ελλάς: ήτοι περί των Ελλήνων των γραψάντων κατά Λατίνων και περί των συγγραμμάτων αυτών, Λειψία 1872 [A. Demetrakopoulos, *Orthodox Greece: Concerning the Greeks Who Wrote Against the Latins and Their Writings*, Leipzig 1872—Greek] 36–37). One notable exception is the article by Alexei Barmine (A. Barmine, Une source méconnue des Dialogues de Nicétas de Maronée, in: *Revue des études byzantines*, 58 (2000), 231–243), which extensively examines the theoretical sources of Nicetas. It is also worth mentioning the analysis of Nicetas' positions by Alexandra Riebe (A. Riebe, *Rom in Gemeinschaft mit Konstantinopel. Patriarch Johannes XI. Bekkos als Verteidiger der Kirchenunion in Lyon (1274)*, Wiesbaden 2005, 235–243).

185 Nicetas Maroniensis, *De processione Spiritus Sancti*, Λόγος α', in: PG 139, 188C–189B.

non-compositeness and drawing an analogy with creation, the "Latin" insists that there is no essence without power. None of the beings is powerless (ἀδύναμον), as the wise Dionysius says, the "Latin" partner in the dialogue notes. Even among beings that are after God (ἐπὶ τῶν μετὰ Θεόν), neither that arising from two things (ἡ ἐκ δυοῖν πρόοδος) nor that coming from them (τὸ προερχόμενον) are composite. This is all the more valid for God.[186]

The arguments attributed by Nicetas from Maroneia to his Latin interlocutor are in no way primarily Latin. The entire "Latin" line of argumentation bears a purely Byzantine character. It should be noted that the doctrine of essential energies is present in Nicetas along with all its key positions, as formulated by Maximus the Confessor, John Damascene, or Photius of Constantinople. The ontologically constituted presence of essence, essential power, and essential energy is obvious to him. Every essence—whether divine or the essence of any contingent being—has power and energy to exist effectively. They, the power and energy, dwell around the essence; they do not coincide with the essence. These διάκρισις and the corresponding ποικιλία do not create any real composition of the actually existing thing (πρᾶγμα). The dynamic presence of οὐσία, δύναμις and ἐνέργεια constitutes both the appearance and the action of the principles and causes. Based on this διάκρισις reason distinguishes essence from power and power from energy.[187]

Nicetas also demonstrates the place of the doctrine of energies among the main positions of the Byzantine tradition. This tradition considers the doctrine of the relation between οὐσία-δύναμις-ἐνέργεια as a universally valid element in the conventional philosophical and speculative-theological apparatus, having its unquestionable place among other technical resources. This allows Nicetas to seamlessly ascribe it to the "Latin." The use of the doctrine as universally valid becomes evident in the argumentation of Nicholas of Methone at the councils of 1156 and 1157, which condemned the Christological opinion of Soterichus Panteugenus. Nicholas builds his thesis on the distinction between the hypostatic properties of the persons in the Trinity and the common essential energy of these same persons.[188]

186 Ibid., in: PG 139, 193B.

187 Cf. G. Kapriev, Gibt es die richtige Dionysius-Interpretation?, in: *The Dionysian Traditions* (Rencontres de Philosophie Médiévale 23), ed. G. Kapriev, Turnhout 2021, 358–363.

188 Nicolaus Methonensis, Ἀντίρρησις, in: A. K. Δημητρακοπούλος, Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ βιβλιοθήκη A′, Leipzig 1866, 333–334. Cf. J. Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian thought*, Washington 1969, 154–155.

14 George of Cyprus (Gregory II)

The rhetorician and philosopher George of Cyprus, elevated to patriarch of Constantinople under the name Gregory II in March 1283, entered into a polemic with the philosopher John XI Bekkos, the former patriarch, regarding the procession of the Holy Spirit and the relationship between the Son and the Holy Spirit at the Council of Blachernae (February–August 1285). As a result of this polemic, the formula of the Council of Lyon in 1274 was rejected. Regarded as the official teaching of Orthodoxy since that time, Gregory's position is today considered the sole notably important conciliar decision of the 13th century in Byzantium and the "key doctrinal thesis of the century."[189]

The decision given in his *Tomos* of 1285 was seen as the act that closed the door on theological unity between East and West and the union of the two churches.[190] It must be acknowledged that the possibility of introducing the *filioque* formula and the Latin-formed theology expressed through it into the dogmatics of the Eastern Church was indeed eliminated through Gregory's formula and its affirmation. However, Gregory's position cannot be designated as firmly anti-Latin. By deviating from the strictly Photian line, Gregory opens up space for the reworking of the Latin trinitarian concept within the norms of the Eastern Orthodox tradition. His formula attempts to create a conceptual framework, theologically correct from an Eastern perspective, in which both sides could discuss controversial issues on an equal footing.[191]

According to Gregory's trinitarian formula, the Holy Spirit has His existence (ὕπαρξιν ἔχειν) from the Father, but exists through the Son (διὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ὑπάρχει). The Holy Spirit receives His being solely from the Father; the Father is the sole cause of His being. However, He acquires an eternal manifestation (ἔκφανσις ἀΐδιος), "eternal appearance" or "eternal revelation," through the Son, thanks to which His existence, eternal radiance (ἔκλαμψις), and revelation (φανέρωσις) are realized and bestowed upon us.[192]

189 A. Papadakis, The Byzantines and the Rise of the Papacy: Points for Reflection 1204–1453, in: *Greeks, Latins and Intellectual History 1204–1500*, eds. M. Hinterberger, C. Schabel, Leuven–Paris–Walpole, MA 2011, 37.

190 Cf. Papadakis, *Crisis in Byzantium. The Filioque Controversy in the Patriarchate of Gregory II of Cyprus (1283–1289)*, New York 1983, *passim*; T. Kolbaba, Repercussion of the Second Council of Lyon (1274): Theological Polemic and the Boundaries of Orthodoxy, in: *Greeks, Latins and Intellectual History 1204–1500*, eds. M. Hinterberger, C. Schabel, Leuven–Paris–Walpole, MA 2011, 62–68.

191 A. Papadakis, The Byzantines and the Rise of the Papacy: Points for Reflection 1204–1453, in: *Greeks, Latins and Intellectual History 1204–1500*, eds. M. Hinterberger, C. Schabel, Leuven–Paris–Walpole, MA 2011, 35–40.

192 Tomos 1285, in: PG 42, 240B–241A.

Gregory's thesis thus states that the formula "through the Son" expresses two circumstances. On the one hand, it expresses the uniqueness of the intra-trinitarian life of the Holy Spirit through the eternal relationship between Him and the Son. On the other hand, through ἔκφανσις ἀΐδιος, extra-trinitarian life or divine self-revelation is described, namely the constant manifestation of the divine life *ad extra*, which is the common life of the entire Trinity. The bestowal of divine gifts in time is seen as one of the cases described by this meaning of the expression.[193]

Gregory's solution to the problem was not unreservedly accepted by his contemporaries. The situation became particularly tense after an attempt to "justify" the Tome by a monk named Marc, a disciple of Gregory, who published his work despite the patriarch's explicit prohibition. In his further writings, where he pleads for the reading of the *Tomos* rather than Marc's writing, Gregory mainly endeavors to explain the difference between ἐκπόρευσις or ὕπαρξιν ἔχειν on the one hand and ὑπάρχειν on the other, as well as the meaning of the concept ἔκφανσις. A development in Gregory's position and a shifting of emphasis can be observed over the course of the polemic. On the one hand, he draws the line between "procession" and "appearance" more categorically. On the other, attention is increasingly focused, not on internal trinitarian relations, but on the presence of the Spirit as a gift (δωρεά) or as activity (ἐνέργεια).

In his *Apology*, he unequivocally states that one should not speak of procession, but of enlightening, revealing, passing over, sending towards, and recognition of the Spirit through the Son.[194] In his later writings, Gregory primarily focuses on the meaning of the concept ἔκφανσις, which expresses the enlightening, sending, and bestowing of the Spirit beyond the divine essence. Already in his *Tomos*, he recalls that Holy Scripture names this gift of the Spirit with the same name, namely "Spirit" (πνεῦμα), just as effect is associated with the name of the one causing that effect, and the name "sun" is borne by the brilliance and radiance of the sun.[195] Divine beneficence, realized in the common descent of the Divinity, is understood by Gregory as those actions (ἔργα) that are common to all the hypostases of the Trinity.[196] In this regard, he refers to Athanasius in order to direct attention to the one sanctifying and enlightening life of God, which is the divine non-hypostasized energy and gift, and is emitted, escorted,

193 Cf. particularly instructive in the Tomos, in: PG 42, 239B–243D. Cf. A. Papadakis, *Crisis in Byzantium. The Filioque Controversy in the Patriarchate of Gregory II of Cyprus (1283–1289)*, New York 1983, 72 and 90–91.

194 Apologia, in: PG 42, 258D.

195 Tomos 1285, in: PG 42, 243A.

196 Cf. De processione Spiritu Sancti, in: PG 42, 288C.

and given in the Holy Spirit from the Son in accordance with the Father.[197] The three hypostases have not only one essence, nature, and dominion, for they are and have one Divinity, but also one movement, one power and one energy.[198]

Desiring to speak of the Spirit as an eternal manifestation of divine life, that is, of the timeless light,[199] Gregory makes another necessary distinction in this context. He draws a distinction between οἰκονομία and συγκατάβασις (descent).[200] Although the Father, as the cause of the Son and the Holy Spirit, may be the first cause, the entire Trinity is the cause of creation.[201] The divine Trinity creates through its one will and energy, θέλεμα καὶ ἐνέργεια, which is also called Spirit, and not the hypostasis of the Holy Spirit.[202] This creation concerns created essences and changes, the moving and the immobile over the course of time (ὑπὸ χρόνον).[203] Because it concerns the eternal revelation of the Spirit, ἔκφανσις ἀΐδιος cannot therefore be equated with the mission of the Spirit in time and its temporal gifts. According to Gregory's terminology, ἔκφανσις ἀΐδιος is a concept related to the supratemporal aspect of χαρίσματα.[204]

If, in the *Tomos*, the theme of eternal revelation is relatively rarely associated with the concept of "energy," it takes a central place in the later writings and especially in *De processione*. Here, it is unequivocally made clear that the Spirit, sent through ἔκφανσις ἀΐδιος, and actualizing the epiphanies of God-Word for us, is an energy and gift of the Word. However, the gift cannot be consubstantial with the giver and have the same nature as him. Energy cannot have the same concept (λόγος) as the essence whose energy it is. Energy, if it is energy, cannot be self-subsistent (αὐθυπόστατον). It has neither its own hypostasis nor its own essence. Therefore, it cannot be the hypostatized essence of the Paraclete, but only His eternal energy and gift, in which we are able to partake, and we are able to partake only of His energy and radiance. Referring to Athanasius, Gregory insists that the descent (ἐπέλευσις) of the Holy Spirit occurs through energy and power.[205] This Spirit, which is energy, grants sanctity and perfects the deified through grace.[206]

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197 Cf. Apologia, 260AB, in: PG 42, 261CD; De processione, in: PG 42, 288AC.

198 De processione, in: PG 42, 270B.

199 Cf. e.g. Apologia, in: PG 42, 264C.

200 Cf. De processione, in: PG 42, 289C.

201 Ibid., 295AB.

202 Ibid., 282BD.

203 Ibid., 293D.

204 A. Papadakis, *Crisis in Byzantium. The Filioque Controversy in the Patriarchate of Gregory II of Cyprus (1283–1289)*, New York 1983, 95.

205 De processione, 289C–290A.

206 Ibid., 290D. Cf. J.-C. Larchet, *La vie et l'œuvre théologique de Georges/Grégoire II de Chypre (1241–1290) patriarche de Constantinole*, Paris 2012; G. Kapriev, Die „errores graecorum" und

15 Gregory Palamas

The peculiarity of Gregory Palamas' teaching lies in its assertion that the doctrine of energies is the sole centre of his system of thought. Palamas's opponents criticize him sharply for his "novelties." His close ally Philotheus Kokkinos, however, indeed asserts in an apologetic tone that many thinkers, inspired by the divine Spirit, have philosophized on the subject—for various reasons, at different times, and in different ways. They have developed different aspects and elucidated different contents. Neither the Hellenic authors nor any of the Christian thinkers, however, have thoroughly explored these questions. Only he, Gregory Palamas, regardless of everything and after everything, has embraced—with deep knowledge and freely—the whole as one. He has brought it to unity and summarized what his predecessors presented in a synopsis.[207] Operating as the main axis of Palamite doctrine, the teaching on energies should serve as the basis for explaining all phenomena that can be the subject of philosophical and theological reflection. Based on this, Palamas formulates the connection between metaphysics, speculative theology, knowledge of God, hesychastic methods of prayer, sacramental church life, mystical experience, and deification. The mystical reality of hesychastic practice and contemplation is expressed in the language of philosophy and discursive theology and is encompassed in a unified system.

Palamas's main aim is to prove the uncreatedness of the essential energies of God and their coeternity with the divine essence, whilst at the same time affirming the non-compositeness of the Divinity in its existence. This is the background against which the distinction is asserted. Palamas strictly distinguishes between two types of God's actions, presenting two aspects: what God is and what he does. Already in the beginning of the Eastern Christian tradition, the distinction between two types of actions in God is established: one according to nature and one according to will. The first is a non-causal revelation of God's nature, while the second action is creatively causative of something external and belonging to a causal order. Palamas distinguishes between creative and god-making divine activity accordingly.[208]

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die EKPHANSIS AIDIOS. Das Zweite Konzil von Lyon—Anstoss zu einer neuen theologischen und philosophischen Entwicklung in Byzanz?, in: *Geistesleben im 13. Jahrhundert* (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 27), eds. J.A. Aertsen, A. Speer, Berlin–New York 2000, 574–603.

207 Philotheos Kokkinos, Λόγος ἐγκωμιαστικὸς εἰς τὸν ἐν ἁγίοις πατέρα ἡμῶν Γρηγόριον ἀρχιεπίσκοπον Θεσσαλονίκης [Encomiastic Oration on Our Holy Father Gregory, Archbishop of Thessalonica], in: PG 151, 590CD.

208 Cf. T. Pino, *Essence and Energies: Being and Naming God in St Gregory Palamas*, London–New York 2023, 86–105.

Creation as the beginning of every non-divine being and life has its starting point in active divine power (δύναμις). God's wisdom, foreknowledge, providence, and will are without beginning, but the actions of the creative power are not. Therefore, the beginning and end are not in the creative power itself, but in its πρᾶξις directed towards creation.[209] From this it follows that not everything signified as God's activity (ἐνέργεια) is without a beginning. Through their existence, created beings are not "natural extensions" of divine activities, but their results (ἀποτελέσματα); they are not created from the energies, but created through the energies from nothing. As a result of a single creative act, the created does not partake in the thoughts-wills (θελητικαὶ ἔννοιαι) that cause it. They, in turn, are neither emanations of the divine essence nor existential actions by this essence. The essential or natural activity of God, on the other hand, is uncreated and is defined as the very existence of God. The divinity of the same God, Palamas concludes, is and is not merely the essence. Divinity is not only the essence of the one God, but also the uncreated power and energy of this one God. Palamas resolutely opposes the theses postulating any kind of division of divine simplicity. The actual existence of God presupposes that His essence is unconditional being, which does not necessarily make His being His own existence, however. The essential activity of God is His life activity, the divine life itself. This activity is understood as an outward manifestation, a natural procession (πρόοδος) of Divinity itself. By nature, God is essentially the underlying factor (ὑποστάτης) in the activity, so that His energy is coeternal with Him, but not as essence and not as hypostasis, but as abiding "around God," or "around the divine nature" (τὰ περὶ τὸν θεόν / περὶ τὴν θείαν φύσιν); the concepts of essence (οὐσία) and nature (φύσις) are synonymous for Palamas too.[210] The energies are an "expression of the koinonetic character of the enhypostatic nature of God."[211]

The differentiation between essence and energy and the syllogistic demonstration of divine existence are built on a metaphysical foundation that does not coincide with Aristotle's metaphysical basis. Aristotle does not strictly differentiate being from existence. He distinguishes between them, but does not

209 Triades, III, 2, 8, in: *Ἰρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα*, τ. 1, επιμ. Π. Χρήστου, Θεσσαλονίκη 1962 (ed. Christou I), 663, 16–20.

210 Cf. Theophanes, 8 et 26 in: *Ἰρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα*, τ. 2, επιμ. Π. Χρήστου, Θεσσαλονίκη 1966 (ed. Christou II), 227, 8–230 et 252, 16–254, 16. Cf. T. Pino, *Essence and Energies: Being and Naming God in St Gregory Palamas*, London–New York 2023, 106–134.

211 N. Loudovikos, *Analogical Identities: The Creation of the Christian Self. Beyond Spirituality and Mysticism in the Patrisitc Era*, Turnhout 2019, 181.

separate them.[212] For him, essence is the key to the individual being.[213] It is also the foundation of the existence of the individual being. Essence determines the being of the individual being, forms the autonomy of its being and thus defines its existence. The essence-conditioned unity of essence, being, and existence defines the individual being as "self-existent." Palamas makes the claim for an existence, whose principle is an essence which is, however, actually different from existence. The essential energies expressing the essence are not the essence itself. The essence itself is not accessible to participation. Participation in its energies, however, is possible, i.e., in its existence. They are knowable through the human mind. Based on their different metaphysical programs, the logical presuppositions in Aristotle and Palamas are not the same.[214]

It is impossible, Palamas insists, to act and create without activity (ἐνέργεια) just as it is impossible to exist without existence. And just as it is impossible to speak of divine existence as created and to think that God has uncreated being, so it is impossible to speak of divine energy as created and simultaneously think that God acts and creates in a non-creative manner. God's energy is uncreated and co-eternal (συναΐδιος) with God; God is active and omnipotent from eternity (ἐξ ἀιδίου ἐνεργὴς καὶ παντοδύναμος).[215] It is not the action and energy, but the bearing of affect (τὸ πάσχειν καὶ τὸ πάθος) that determines composition, Palamas points out. However, God acts without undergoing any affect and without changing.[216]

The simplicity and non-compositeness of God[217] do not presuppose the possibility of viewing divine power (δύναμις) as a creation, thereby denying that it is προαιώνιος, but quite the opposite.[218] The energies are God's own by nature and are inseparable from Him (φυσικῶς καὶ ἀχωρίστως). The name "God" denotes

212 H. Kassim, *Aristotle and Aristotelianism in Medieval Muslim, Jewish, and Christian Philosophy*, Lanham–New York–Oxford 2000, 45–48.

213 C.D.C. Reeve, *Substantial Knowledge. Aristotle's Metaphysics*, Indianapolis 2000, 1.

214 И. Христов, Битие и съществуване в дискусията за метода между св. Григорий Палама и Варлаам, в: *Хуманизъм, култура, религия*, съст. И. Христов, София 1997 [I. Christov, Being and Existence in the Methodological Discourse between St. Gregory Palamas and Barlaam, in: *Humanism, Culture, Religion*, ed. I. Christov, Sofia 1997—Bulgarian], 42–48. Attempted analysis of the logic of Palamas cf. in: P. Rojec, The Logic of Palamism, in: *Orthodox Christian Thinking*, ed. A. Schumann, Berlin–New York 2012, 38–81.

215 Ibid. 140, ed. Christou V, 113, 30; 114, 1.

216 Ibid. 145, ed. Christou V, 116, 8–10.

217 Cf. G. Mantzaridis, Simplicity of God according to St Gregory Palamas, in: *Truine God: Incomprehensible but Knowable—The Philosophical and Contemporary Philosophy and Theology*, ed. C. Athanasopoulos, Cambridge 2015, 19–27.

218 Gregorius Palamas, Contra Gregoram, 2, 20, in: Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα, τ. 4, επιμ. Π. Χρήστου, Θεσσαλονίκη 1988 (= ed. Christou IV), 280, 4–17.

also what is naturally around Him (τὰ περὶ τὸν Θεὸν φυσικῶς θεωρούμενα). It is precisely God's energy—without being composite (σύνθετος)—which God has by nature and from eternity.[219] God is one and eternal in an indivisible way.[220] The essence and energy of God are one (ἕν ἐστιν οὐσία καὶ ἐνέργει θεοῦ).[221] God is entirely (ὅλος) essence and entirely energy.[222] The divine essence and the divine energy are undivided and omnipresent (ἀχωρίστως παροῦσαι). According to theologians, they are indivisibly divided (μερίζεται ἀμερίστως), while divine nature remains perfectly indivisible.[223]

Similar statements can be found throughout Palamas' writings. They shape the way he describes the difference between the essence and energies of God. Infinitude is inherently linked to the constitution of the energies. God and everything around Him are infinite; they are the infinite (τὸ ἄπειρον), Palamas insists, based on a quote from Athanasius of Alexandria.[224] Through a quote from Maximus the Confessor, he further asserts that the targeted originless works (ἄναρχα ἔργα) of God are immortality, infinitude (ἡ ἀπειρία), and beingness (ἡ ὀντότης), which can be contemplated around God.[225] The activity of the divine entity itself is one, but it multiplies in its expressions and manifestations beyond the intra-trinitarian being.

According to him, essence and energy as well as hypostases should be defined as beingnesses of God. There are three existing beingnesses of God (τριῶν ὄντων τοῦ θεοῦ): essence, energies, and three divine hypostases.[226] However, these three beingnesses do not cause a real division of the Divinity: God exists as a Trinity (τριάς), we believe, but he is not truine (οὐ τριπλοῦς). Again, Palamas calls the energies things which are not essences: 'πράγματά ἐστι κἂν οὐκ οὐσίαι'.[227] How can they be things, Palamas rhetorically asks in the style of Gregoras, and not be essences?[228] The being, which exists without further determination (τό ὁπωσδήποτε ὄν), he continues at this point, is not only called a "thing." What is observed in itself, and not in something else, is nature (καθ' ἑαυτὸ καὶ μὴ ἐν ἑτέρῳ θεωρῆται), while what is observed in something else exists

219 Ibid., II, 21, ed. Christou IV, 280,30–31; 280,34–35; 281,19–20.
220 Gregorius Palamas, De divinis operationibus, 8, ed. Christou II, 102, 6–9.
221 Ibid., 4, ed. Christou II, 99, 4–6.
222 Gregorius Palamas, Contra Acindynum, 4, 15, 41, in: Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα, τ. 3, επιμ. Π. Χρήστου, Θεσσαλονίκη 1970 (ed. Christou III), 270,12–13.
223 Palamas, Capita 150, 74, ed. Christou V, 77,11–14.
224 Palamas, De divinis operationibus, 10, ed. Christou II, 104,16–17.
225 Palamas, Triades, III, 3, 8, ed. Christou I, 686, 19–21.
226 Palamas, Capita 150, 75, ed. Christou V, 77, 26–27.
227 Palamas, Contra Gregoram, ed. Christou IV, 280, 29–30.
228 Ibid., 21, ed. Christou IV, 281, 8.

as belonging to nature (φυσικῶς). It is to be counted among the accidents or properties. However, nothing is accidental to God, nothing can be attributed to Him κατὰ συμβεβηκός. Energies belong naturally (φυσικῶς) to God without being "accidents."[229]

With all the Byzantine linguistic tradition known to him, Palamas understands "πρᾶγμα" in a general sense, not necessarily as an autonomous substance or *res*. The concretum of πρᾶξις expresses simply something actual or acting and therefore "something existing." Palamas shows quite clearly that the hypostasis itself is primarily recognised as something acting. If the essence had no energy different from it, he insists, it would not exist in reality and would be observed only as a theoretical construct. Thus, for example, man, considered in general (ὁ καθόλου λεγόμενος ἄνθρωπος), is someone who cannot think, see, speak, eat, etc. He would not have energy distinct from the essence showing that he is a hypostasis. The generally considered human being is absolutely non-existing (τελέως ἀνυπόστατός ἐστιν ὁ καθόλου ἄνθρωπος). However, when man has an inherent energy (ἐνέργεια ἔμφυτος), distinct from the essence, it is understood that man is a hypostasis and not non-existent. Because such energies are not available individually, it becomes clear that the human being has many hypostases.[230] The hypostasis is first recognised as actually existing and being. Its existential actions prove it to be a πρᾶγμα. Συμβεβηκός cannot be adequately translated with "accident." We also know of inseparable *symbebēkota* (ἀχώριστα συμβεβηκότα), notes Palamas.[231] Thus essential properties are also meant by this. However, for God, who remains absolutely unchangeable, nothing can be predicted κατὰ συμβεβηκός. Divine energy in God is neither essence nor accident, Palamas concludes, although some theologians designate it as a quasi-accident (συμβεβηκός πως) just to show that it is in God but is not essence.[232] "Being" is everything that one can claim that it "is," without thereby necessarily being essence or substance. Defining energy as *πρᾶγμα* and being does not presuppose a *distinctio realis*.

Palamas sharpens this point by noting that in creatures belonging to a certain genus, there is a similarity at the level of energy. However, energy is characteristic of each created hypostasis, and the contingent hypostasis acts according to itself.[233] In contrast, life and power are something that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have in themselves. The supreme Trinity is nothing

229 Ibid., ed. Christou IV, 281, 8–13.
230 Palamas, Capita 150, 136, ed. Christou V, 112, 7–19.
231 Ibid., 127, ed. Christou V, 107, 1.
232 Ibid., ed. Christou V, 107, 3–5; 8–11.
233 Ibid., 112, ed. Christou V, 97, 9–12.

other than God Himself (ἀυτός ἐστιν ὁ Θεός); The highest Monad is nothing other than God Himself. There is no difference between the Trinity and the Monad.[234] God is identical with Himself in everything. The energy of the three divine hypostases is one, not in the sense of similarity, as with us, but it is truly one, including in number.[235] The distinction between the essence and energy of God is in no way empirically given to us. In this case, the role of the intellect (νοῦς) cannot be bypassed.

Palamas begins an elaborate reflection via the story that the following phrase was written above the entrance of Plato's school: "Let no one ignorant of geometry, enter here." Geometry is completely unfamiliar to anyone who is incapable of thinking and speaking about the indivisible as a divisible (περὶ τῶν ἀχωρίστων ὡς κεχωρισμένων). For example, a boundary without that which it bounds is inconceivable. Geometry almost always deals with boundaries, where the boundaries are often discussed and presupposed on their own without consideration of the bounded, because the *nous* divides the undivided. If one has not yet learned to separate the body from its surroundings by using his intellect (νοῦς), how can one speak about nature in itself, which is not only unseparated from what belongs to it, but rather cannot exist at all without it? How can one speak of the universal as universal, when it exists in the particular? They are distinguished only by the intellect and reason. Firstly, one refers to the multitude of individuals, provided that the universal does not exist without them, as is logical. How can one speak of what is achievable through the intellect? How can it be understood when we claim that every *nous* has thoughts (διανοήματα) and our *nous* exists as every single thought? Will they not laugh at our statements and cry out that we claim that because of this every person must have two or even many intellects? If, in such cases, one cannot speak or think about the inseparable as separable (περὶ τῶν ἀδιαιρέτων ὡς διῃρημένων), how would one be able to speak and think about it with regard to God, whereby the theologians insist that there are several such unities and differences? The sentence "unities transcend and precede differences,"[236] neither abolishes their existence nor averts them. The pupils of Acindynus are unable to accept and understand the indivisible division (ἀδιαίρετος διαίρεσις) regarding God, even when they hear that we speak in accordance with the saints about the divided unity (διῃρημένη ἕνωσις). This is due to the fact that some things regarding God can be explained, while others cannot. God is a unit that cannot be grasped in its essence. However, one can grasp the divine energy by what it creates. One

234 Ibid., 113, ed. Christou v, 98, 1–3; 8–12.

235 Ibid., 138, ed. Christou v, 113, 7–8.

236 Dionysius Areopagita, *De divinis nominibus* 2, 11, ed. Suchla, 135, 14–136, 6 (PG 3, 652A).

can understand God according to His eternal will, His eternal providence, His eternal wisdom, or, to put it in the words of St. Maximus, according to His infinite power (ἄπειρος δύναμις), wisdom, and goodness directed toward us. When Barlaam, Acindynus, and their successors hear us say that these distinctions are necessary, they accuse us of talking about multiple gods and multiple uncreated things, thereby making God a composite being. However, God is divided indivisibly (ἀδιαιρέτως διαιρεῖται) and united dividedly (συνάπτεται διῃρεμένως), without undergoing multiplication or composition.[237]

It was worth pursuing this lengthy exposition in order to grasp Palamas's position and its incompatibility with the *distinctio realis* in all its forms. He does not at all abandon his thesis that essence and energies, both in the contingent and in God, necessarily differ from each other as distinct "things" or "beings." Along with this, he shows that, just as in the contingent, so in God, there is an "indivisible division," occurring under the guise of unity. For this reason, they should not be interpreted as different substances or subjects, but should be distinguished as different aspects of the one object. This circumstance applies first and foremost to the Godhead with its totally and empirically inaccessible identity. The distinction is neither to be defined as πραγματικῶς nor as κατ' ἐπίνοιαν. Palamas has sufficient grounds not to define it conceptually with any more precision.[238]

16 Barlaam, Acindynus and Gregoras

During the erupting Hesychast controversy, which broke out in the 1330s,[239] the doctrine of Palamas on the essential energies with regard to God became problematic from various angles. Palamas and his followers insist on an "undivided division" of the essence and the essential energy of God. The question arises whether the energy can be distinguished from the divine essence and whether

237 Palamas, Capita 150, 81, ed. Christou V, 80, 30–82, 7.

238 Cf. G. Kapriev, Gregory Palamas, in: *Byzanz. Judentum* (*Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg, Die Philosophie des Mittelalters, Bd. 1), eds. A. Brungs, G. Kapriev, V. Mudroch, Basel 2019, 151–152; G. Kapriev, Die scotische Unterscheidung von Essenz und Energie bei George Scholarios und die inneren Quellen der palamitischen Tradition, in: *Contemplation and Philosophy: Scholastic and Mystical Modes of Medieval Philosophical Thought. A tribute to Kent Emery, Jr.*, eds. R. Hofmeister Pich, A. Speer, Leiden 2018, 152–148.

239 For a detailed account of the hesychast disputes, cf.: И. Христов, *Византийското богословие през XIV в. Дискурсът за божествените енергии*, София 2016 [I. Christov, *Byzantine Theology in the 14th Century: The Discourse on Divine Energies*, Sofia 2016—Bulgarian].

it could somehow exist separately. Some of Palamas's opponents viewed it as coinciding with the essence, insofar as it is identical with the existence of God. It is not given for participation in creation and should not be equated with the creative divine energies, or be considered as acting parallel to them. The question was raised as to how and to what extent the essential energy acts *ad extra*. This perspective emphasizes the question of whether the asserted διάκρισις between the essence of God and His essential energy is πραγματική or only κατ' ἐπίνοιαν, real or only conceptual.[240] If God's essential energy still communicates with creation, namely in the form of grace, argued others, then its carriers are precisely the creative divine energies. Whether the human being is able to clearly distinguish these energies from the creative economical energies of God is questioned. The whole polemic, however, takes place within the framework of the οὐσία-δύναμις-ἐνέργεια-relation recognized by all the disputants. Dionysius the Areopagite was declared to be the foremost authority in this debate.

Barlaam of Calabria insisted that the Tabor light was the creative act of a divine miracle and therefore a symbol of the divine. If the light were uncreated, then it would have to be a pure act of Divinity, i.e. the divine essence itself. Since God has a simple nature, essence and essential activity are not to be distinguished in Him.[241]

Gregory Acindynus, for his part, claimed that Palamas's main mistake was not distinguishing the different meanings of "ἐνέργεια," although it can be understood as hypostatic, i.e., denoting the uncreated Godhead itself, or as non-hypostatic, i.e., as created, representational symbols and metaphorical designations of the divine entity. Acindynus argued that the divine essential energy is one and identical with the essence of God. At the same time, along with this, he declares that Palamas opens a gap between the Creator and the creation by denying that God is essentially present in the world. Moreover, through this he establishes a mediator between God and creation. "Energy" in

240 Cf. J.A. Demetracopoulos, Palamas Transformed. Palamite Interpretations of the Distinction between God's 'Essence' and 'Energies' in Late Byzantium, in: *Greeks, Latins and Intellectual History 1204–1500*, eds. M. Hinterberger, C. Schabel, Leuven–Paris–Walpole 2011, 263–372; Cf. from another point of view G. Kapriev, Die scotische Unterscheidung von Essenz und Energie bei George Scholarios und die inneren Quellen der palamitischen Tradition, in: *Contemplation and Philosophy: Scholastic and Mystical Modes of Medieval Philosophical Thought. A tribute to Kent Emery, Jr.*, eds. R. Hofmeister Pich, A. Speer, Leiden 2018, 140–142; T. Pino, *Essence and Energies: Being and Naming God in St Gregory Palamas*, London–New York 2023, 173–189.

241 Cf. R. Sinkewicz, The doctrine of the knowledge of God in the early writings of Barlaam the Calabrian, in: *Medieval studies*, 44 (1982), 181–242; С. Красиков, *Античная древность и средние века*, Екатеринбург 2000, 266–283 [S. Krasikov, *Ancient Antiquity and Middle Ages*, Ekaterinburg 2000, 266–283].

its proper sense is used for the charismata, gifts, and the other creations of God, created for our good. This created energy is the visible action through which God's deeds are expressed. The multiplicity of energies asserted by Palamas follows from his misunderstanding that creations participate to varying degrees in the almighty divine essence. The concept of "energy," when it denotes non-hypostatic things, implies something created, because everything outside the Trinity is necessarily created. Due to the simplicity of God's existence, if we want to understand the divine essence as action, it is a pure act. Essence and energy can be legitimately distinguished only in the sphere of the created. Even the cautious mode of expression cannot prevent the presupposition of some real (κατὰ τὸ πρᾶγμα) division in the divine essence, Acindynus thought. The only possible distinction with regard to the divine essence is the purely conceptual one (κατ' ἐπίνοιαν). In all other cases, one would understand the divine essence as non-unitary and composite because composite is not only that which consists of many substances, but also that which contains properties or non-hypostatic realities that relate only accidentally to nature, whether called actions, forces, or otherwise. Unlike Barlaam, Acindynus does not deny the presence of uncreated energies in creation. But the carrier of uncreated grace is created grace, which enables the deification of man, i.e. the realization of uncreated grace. Deification occurs thanks to the incarnation of the divine Logos. The doctrine of Acindynus is entirely Christological. According to him, there can be no other access to Divinity except Christ, the sacraments, and the exercise of supernatural love elicited through sacramental participation. Participation in God is possible only in the way in which all radii and circumference of a circle participate in the center of the circle. They proceed from the center of the circle without coinciding with it or completely encompassing it. Here there is no presumption of any difference between essence and energies. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that different beings participate in God in different ways, depending on their potential. This fact, argues Acindynus, would remain completely inexplicable if it were a question of a participation in the eternal divine essence, which would be necessarily an eternal participation of the creature in God. Then the created would be coeternal with the Creator. Participation in God is neither an essential identity nor possession of a common energy but an interpersonal loving communion. The unity between man and God arises through the relationship of love and, in this, the deification of man is achieved.[242]

242 Cf. *Gregorii Acindyni refutationes duae operis Gregorii Palamae cui titulus dialogus inter orthodoxum et Barlaamitam*, ed. J. Nadal Cañellas, Turnhout 1995; J. Nadal Cañellas, Gregorio Akíndinos, in: *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition*, vol. 2, eds. C.G. Conticello, V. Conti-

After Acindynus's death, leadership of the anti-Palamite "party" was assumed by Nikephorus Gregoras. He attacked the Palamite distinction between God's essence and energy as a Christian adaptation of Proclus's doctrine of henads, accusing him of propagating a mediator between God and creation. In his descrition of the debate with Palamas in 1355, he insists, among other things, that Palamas favors only one of the meanings of the homonymous word "ἐνέργεια." Gregoras denies that the uncreated energy differs in any way from the uncreated essence. He accuses Palamas of teaching a composite of the divine essence.[243]

17 Prochorus Cydones

Prochorus Cydones, the most prominent Byzantine Thomist dedicates a separate treatise to this issue: Περὶ οὐσίας καὶ ἐνεργείας (*On Essence and Energy*). From the very first sentence, he formulates a decisive approach: those who speak of the essence and energy of God, when it comes to whether they (essence and energy) are different or identical κατὰ τὸ πρᾶγμα, first ask how many types of energy there are.[244] Prochorus programmatically explains that any natural energy comes from some kind of power. He divides the powers into two major groups, namely δύναμις παθητική and δύναμις ποιητική (or δραστική), also called δύναμις ἐνέργητική, which is the principle-ἀρχή of active energy (ἐνέργεια δραστική).[245] In what follows he discusses different kinds of ἐνέργεια δραστική. In God there is no δύναμις παθητική (passive power, *potentia passiva*), Prochorus stresses, which dwells as matter in which the energy would be form. Every matter is δύναμις παθητική and every passive *potentia* is matter. Every energy, separated from its power/potentiality, such as the energy of formal-

cello, Turnhout 2002, 189–256; G. Kapriev, Gregory Acindynus, in: *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. H. Lagerlund, Dordrecht 2011, 437–439; T. Boiadjiev, Gregory Acindynus, in: *Byzanz. Judentum* (*Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg, Die Philosophie des Mittelalters, Bd. 1), eds. A. Brungs, G. Kapriev, V. Mudroch, Basel 2019, 133–137; A.P. Zachariou, The Relation of Gregory Akindynos to Barlaam the Calabrian, in: *Theologia Orthodoxa. Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai*, 2 (2022), 255–267.

243 Nikephoros Gregoras, Ρωμαϊκή Ἱστορία [Roman History], III, 298, 17–299, 1; 307, 9–15; 308, 16–309, 1, in: Nikephoros Gregoras, *Rhomäische Geschichte*, III, ed. F. Tinnefeld, Stuttgart 2007, 319; J. Demetracopoulos. Nikephoros Gregoras, in: *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. H. Lagerlund, Dordrecht 2011, 898; F. Lauritzen, Plotinus the Antipalamite, in: *Zbornik radova Visantološkog instituta*, 59 (2022), 133–144.

244 Prochorus Cydones, De essentia et operatione, 1, 1, in: PG 151, 1192B.

245 Ibid., 1, 2, in: PG 151, 1193C; cf. 2, 5, in: PG 151, 1236C.

material beings, is imperfect. Unlike all other beings, therefore, the energy of God is His essence. Even immaterial creatures have δύναμις παθητική, through which they can receive the being.

Every energy that is separated from its potency, such as the energy of formal-material creations, is imperfect (ἀτελής).[246] In this context, it is particularly important for Prochorus to prove that in God there is no δύναμις whatsoever because ἡ ἐνέργεια τοῦ Θεοῦ, the energy of God, which is His essence, unlike any other being, has no ἀρχή, because it is neither born nor emanating.[247] The essence of God coincides with His being.[248] God is εἶδος καθ' αὐτὸ ὑφεστώς.[249] He is αὐτοενέργεια, παντὸς ἐνέργεια.[250] While the distinction between the divine persons is ἀναφορά πραγματική, one can distinguish between the essence and energy of God μόνῳ λόγῳ, or κατὰ τὸν λόγον only.[251] The entire treatise unequivocally demonstrates that, both in respect to God and creation, the relevance of the perspective οὐσία-δύναμις-ἐνέργεια remains obvious to Prochorus, who insists, however, that the respective concepts and thinking through them are expressed analogically (ἀναλογικῶς) for God and for created beings.[252]

18 The Doctrine of Energies in the Works of the Next Palamite Generation

After the death of Palamas and especially after his canonization and recognition as a father and teacher of the Church in 1368, it appears that his teachings have become firmly established. However, there remain further issues to be resolved concerning its philosophical dimension. The Palamites endeavor to adhere to his paradigm, as Philotheus Kokkinos exemplifies. Nonetheless, the subsequent Palamite generation discusses the foundational structures of the doctrine all the more rarely, instead utilizing them as tools of explanation. Two succinct examples in this regard are the works of Nicholas Kabasilas and Callistus Angelicudes.

246 Ibid., 1.2, in: PG 151, 1196CD; 2, 5, in: PG 151, 1233C.
247 Ibid., 1, 5, in: PG 151, 1233B.
248 Ibid., 1, 2, in: PG 151, 1197A.
249 Ibid., 1, 7, in: PG 151, 1217B.
250 Ibid., 1, 8, in: PG 151, 1217C.
251 Ibid., 2, 5, in: PG 151, 1236B.
252 Ibid., 2, 1, in: PG 151, 1220B.

18.1 *Philotheus Kokkinos*

Philotheus Kokkinos, Patriarch of Constantinople from 1353 to 1354 and again from 1364 to 1376, was among the closest associates of Gregory Palamas. He collaborated with Neilus Kabasilas on the preparation of the *Tomos* of 1351 and independently authored the *Tomos* of 1368, which were crucial acts in establishing Palamas' doctrine. Many classical formulations of this doctrine are down to him. Moreover, he was the one to canonize Palamas through the *Tomos* of 1368. Kokkinos authored more than 30 texts dedicated to explaining the Palamite doctrine. He was esteemed by his contemporaries for his fidelity to it and for elucidating it vividly and accurately.[253] Nevertheless, there are attempts nowadays to categorize him among the compromising Palamites who deviated from the fundamental principles of their teacher, particularly because they referred to the distinction between essence and energy as a distinction κατ' ἐπίνοιαν or λόγῳ, meaning "according to thought" or "by reason."[254] Kokkinos' own view is explicitly expressed in his two speeches against Acindynus on the Tabor Light, written in the early 1360s.

Philotheus lays out the basic theses in his preface: the Tabor Light of the Lord is the natural and uncreated glory of God and divinity;[255] the holy Light reveals itself (φαίνεσθαι) to the saints in the spirit (ἐν πνεύματι).[256] Additionally, he addresses another topic in considerable detail: "The priest of God Gregory [Palamas] does not worship many divinities."[257]

"Neither did the God-consecrated Gregory acknowledge nor glorify two or more divinities, as you assert, greater or lesser, which differ among themselves and in relation to the one divine essence," Philotheus states.[258] After quoting two passages from Dionysius, he further teaches: "Do you not see that calling the divine energy "Deity" and asserting that the divine nature is surperior to it, not according to the created and non-created, but insofar as the

253 Cf. G. Kapriev, Philotheus Kokkinos, in: *Byzanz. Judentum* (*Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg, Die Philosophie des Mittelalters, Bd. 1), eds. A. Brungs, G. Kapriev, V. Mudroch, Basel 2019, 156–157. On the life and work of Philotheus Kokkinos, see M. Mitrea, *A Late Byzantine Hagiographer: Philotheos Kokkinos and his Vitae of Contemporary Saints*, PhD in Classics, The University of Edinburg 2017.

254 J.A. Demetracopoulos, Palamas Transformed. Palamite Interpretations of the Distinction between God's 'Essence' and 'Energies' in Late Byzantium, in: *Greeks, Latins and Intellectual History 1204–1500*, eds. M. Hinterberger, C. Schabel, Leuven–Paris–Walpole 2011, 263–372.

255 Kokkinos, Προθεωρία τοῦ λόγου, ed. Yaneva, 22, 22–24.

256 Kokkinos, Προθεωρία τοῦ λόγου, ed. Yaneva, 22, 33–34.

257 Kokkinos, Προθεωρία τοῦ λόγου, ed. Yaneva, 26, 29.

258 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 98, 16–19.

non-partial and relationless (ἀμέτεκτος καὶ ἄσχετος) supersede participations and relations, is not the statement of just anyone, but of the genuine theology and teaching of the Fathers?".[259] For emphasis he points out that the Palamites worship and adore the one Divinity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, not only through its essence but also through its power and uncreated energy and by all things that we contemplate and affirm theologically about its essence. We do not say, he adds, that there are two deities, nor that there is one higher and one lower Divinity (οὐ δύο θεότητας … οὐδ' ὑπερκειμένην τε καὶ ὑφειμένην), but we affirm that there exists one Divinity, which, however, is contemplated not only by its essence but also—he refers to the first paragraph of *Contra Eunomium* by Gregory of Nyssa—by "perfection in all things" (ἐν τῇ διὰ πάντων τελειότητι). By "all things" in this sentence, Philotheus understands free will, wisdom, goodness, and the will-worshipping power of God.[260]

This extensive polemic does not arise out of nothing. In 1337, Gregory Palamas uses the phrase "higher and lower Divinity" in his fourth letter to Acindynus, attempting to attribute it to the "holy fathers."[261] His opponents have never failed to accuse him of "dyotheism" and even "polytheism" because of these words. Over the next twenty years, Palamas will make repeated efforts to argue for the metaphorical, rather than literal sense of this statement. Today's Eastern Orthodox theologians summarize his thesis as follows: "According to the essence, which Palamas calls "higher Divinity," God is transcendent, invisible and unknown, but according to His energies, which Palamas calls "lower Divinity," God is in the world, visible and known."[262] It should be noted that Philotheus recognizes the danger of this unfortunate formulation and endeavors to remove it, offering more precise expressions from the perspective of Palamite doctrine.

In this context, he insists that the divine energy is Divinity. In its expression *ad extra*, it is called spirit-πνεῦμα. Kokkinos allows the teaching of the theologians, John Chrysostom among them, that the Lord taught us to call spiritual

259 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 101, 5–10.

260 Kokknos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 27, 23–32.

261 Gregorius Palamas, Ἐπιστολή Γ' πρὸς Ἀκίνδυνον, 6, in: Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα, τ. 1, επιμ. Π. Χρήστου, Θεσσαλονίκη 1962, 300, 19–20. Cf. T. Alexopoulos, The Problem of the Distinction between Essence and Energies in the Hesychast Controversy. Saint Gregory Palamas' Epistula III: The Version published by P. Christou in light of Palamas' other works on the Divine Energies, in: *Studia patristica*, 94 (2017), 521–533.

262 G. Martzelos, Der heilige Gregorios Palamas und die neuere deutschsprachige Theologie, in: *Hephaestus Research Repository*, 2011: http://hdl.handle.net/11728/7654.

energies "spirits" (πνεύματα).[263] Christ gave an energy to those united with the Spirit, saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit!" (λάβετέ πνεῦμα ἅγιον—John, 20:22), after which, along with the gift of forgiveness (ἀφέσις), he gave them the sanctifying appellation—the personal name of the Spirit, through which he grants them, not the Holy Spirit Himself, but the spiritual gift of forgiveness.[264] This holy Spirit is distinguished from the hypostasis of the Holy Spirit.[265] Philotheus speaks of the one divinity and power and the one kingdom, which in the three perfect divine hypostases have one and the same essence, power, dominion, and energy, indivisible in the three hypostases.[266]

Deification (θέωσις) comes to people in this world as an infinite bestowal of grace according to divine philanthropy.[267] The worthy become gods, not through nature, but through grace, that is, energy. They receive true incorruptibility (ἀφθαρσία) before general resurrection and incorruptibility. Powers, προόδοι, and essential traits peculiar to the divine nature are expressed in this preliminary divine state.[268] The mystery of Christ's transfiguration on Mount Tabor is nothing other than the mystery of the future aeon, the glory and power of the divine and incomprehensible nature with which he comes to judge and condemn everyone according to their merits.[269]

On Tabor the disciples of Jesus saw the divinity of the Only Begotten, shining mysteriously through His inner-hypostatic and co-natural flesh (διὰ τῆς ἐνυποστάτου καὶ συμφοῦς αὐτῷ σαρκὸς). At that time both the apostles and the prophets learned that the glorification which glorified Moses personally, illuminated him externally, through grace and, temporarily (κατὰ χάριν καὶ πρὸς καιρὸν), as a servant of the divine mysteries.[270] In human history before Christ, the outpouring of the Spirit was neither upon all flesh nor complete.[271]

With this, Philotheus picks up the ancient theme of the deification of Old Testament saints, developed by Palamas in harmony with Maximus the Confessor. The deification of God's chosen ones before Christ's incarnation, Palamas demonstrates, is also a direct action of divine grace, that is, the natural energy of God directed by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. The difference is that this grace was bestowed upon the patriarchs and prophets in relation to their spe-

263 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 96, 15–16.
264 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 96, 6–11.
265 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 88, 4–10.
266 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 88, 4–10.
267 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 43, 20–22.
268 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed Yaneva, 84, 4–12.
269 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 29, 29–30, 3.
270 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 44, 3–10.
271 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 116, 29–30.

cific missions. The bestowal of grace has a "functional" character, linked to their particular vocation. Usually, participation in Divinity occurs through a particular theophany. Moses marks an exception because (Exodus, 33, 11) God spoke with him face to face (ἐνώπιος ἐνωπίῳ). According to Palamas' interpretation, he was deified personally, by the hypostasis of the Son. That even Moses receives deification because of His sacred-historical mission is observed, precisely by attending to the connection between the historical manifestation of Christ and His meta-historical presence. After the historical salvific work of Christ, divinizing grace is already accessible to all members of the Church, according to their personal way of life, faith, perfection, that is, acording to their unique characteristics.[272]

Now, Kokkinos observes, the Kingdom of God is within us (Luke, 17, 21). When we close down our senses, become close to ourselves and to God, and, freed from the external cycle of the world, enter into ourselves, we clearly see the Kingdom of God within us.[273] The light, that is, the natural energy of God, no longer comes from outside, but radiates from within.

Deification encompasses the psychosomatic unity, the whole person, entirely. The body (σῶμα) is united in communion (συγκοινωνεῖ) with the soul. In this communion, it is transformed together with the soul into a supernatural state. It is deified with it through an analogous participation in deification.[274] Christ has made divine the entire man internally hypostatic to Him, so that the whole man, i.e., the mind, the soul, and the body, not one without the other, but the whole man entirely (ἀλλ' ὅλον διόλου ἄνθρωπον), may be deified by grace.[275]

God becomes participatory in each person separately, according to their measure and rank (κατὰ τὸ μέτρον καὶ τὴν τάξιν ἑκάστου). He manifests himself proportionally (ἀναλόγως), as He manifested Himself to His disciples.[276] Following Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, Kokkinos attempts to make this circumstance understandable through two parables: Just as a seal, which is one, leaves something of its original impression on many prints, thereby imparting something of its energy but in no way of its essence, and gives well-defined and clear prints to that which is receptive to receiving its matter, and gives

272 Cf. G. Kapriev, Die Begegnung Moses' mit Christus (Gregorios Palamas, Triaden, II, 3, 55), in: *Sophia. The Wisdom of God—Die Weisheit Gottes*, eds. T. Hainthaler, F. Mali, G. Emmenegger, M.L. Ostermann, Innsbruck–Wien 2017, 387–394.

273 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 130, 18–23.

274 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 127, 24–128, 1.

275 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 128, 25–30.

276 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 47, 9–12.

unclear and faded ones to that which is unreceptive, or just as a voice, shared by many ears, does not divide within itself and is not equally perceived by all (animals and humans, young and old, healthy and impaired in terms of acoustic energy), so too the divine nature acts in everything and is shared by everything, according to the disposition of each creature to perceive it. It remains completely undivided and pure in its essence and is shared in the way natural energies are distributed.[277] These and similar differentiations between essence and energy persistently raise the question of how Kokkinos distinguishes between the divine essence and the essential energies of God.

To the logician Kokkinos, the logically correct formulation of the distinction between the essence and the energies is a practically insoluble problem. He repeatedly emphasizes that the issue transcends any logic and word (ὑπὲρ λόγον). He relies on Gregory the Theologian and John Damascene to assert that one thing is the willing and another the will or, which is the same, the acting (ἐνεργῶν) and the action/energy, the mover and the movement. But they are also not separated. How is it possible to separate the movement from the mover? Furthermore, it should be noted that both—essence and energy—are uncreated. In this situation, at least with the mind (μηδὲ νῷ), Philotheus insists, things that cannot be separated (τὰ μὴ χωριστά) can be understood as separated (χωριστῶς). Because both are uncreated, the one God is not composed (σύνθετος) of them. There can be no division or composition (μερισμὸς ἢ σύνθεσις) between the mover and the movement, especially in the case of a godly movement where no addition or subtraction can follow.[278]

The lack of a strict or at least logically formulated differentiation between essence and energy is not only characteristic of Philotheus. He at least attempts to describe the difference in an adequate way, without identifying it with the distinctions πραγματικῶς and κατ᾽ ἐπίνοιαν. In two places, he quotes a consideration of Dionysius Pseudo-Areopagite[279] at length to strengthen his own position. We claim, he explains, that the προόδοι of the θεαρχία are a divine division (διάκρισις θεία). On the one hand, divinity divides unitedly (ἡνωμένως διακρίνεται) and, on the other hand, it multiplies without leaving the One.[280] It refers to the unified in division (τὸ ἐν τῇ διακρίσει ἡνωμένον).[281] By these turns of phrase Kokkinos is quite close to Palamas' mode of expression. However, he

277 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 80, 22–81, 10.
278 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 112, 8–19.
279 Dionysius Areopagita, De divinis nominibus, 2, 11, ed. Suchla, 135, 14–136, 6 (PG 3, 652A).
280 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 61, 4–15; Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 112, 27–113, 4.
281 Kokknos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 113, 7.

aligns himself with Gregory the Theologian, saying that, for us, piety-εὐσέβεια consists, not of words (ἐν λέξεσιν), but of practice (ἐν πράγμασι).[282]

From this perspective he emphasizes that human nature participates in a communion with the divine.[283] In this κοινωνία, however, man does not assume the divine nature itself in himself.[284] The theologian, Philotheus asserts, quoting Palamas, gives clear teachings on the unparticipative, unrelated, and inimitable (τὸ ἀμέθεκτον καὶ ἄσχετον καὶ ἀμίμητον) in the divine nature and on the participative and communal (μεθεκτὸν καὶ κοινωνικόν) in the divine energies accordingly. In order not to be mistaken for the divine nature, he says that they are from nature (ἐκ τῆς φύσεως αὐτὰς εἶναι) and calls them προόδοι or providences, which pour out abundantly and superabundantly. The divine nature thereby abides above them (ἐπέκεινα τούτων).[285] We should not fear the differentiation of Divinity in division (ἐν τῇ διακρίσει διαφορὰ τῆς θεότητος) and the corresponding assumed superiority (ὑπεροχή).[286]

Philotheus Kokkinos unequivocally distinguishes between essence and energy. The energies undeniably differ from nature (ὁπωσδήποτε διαφερούσας τῆς φύσεως), he stresses.[287] Moreover, they are also non-created and abide as equally valuable to the nature radiating them. They are ὁμοτίμως.[288] The theologians of the Church unanimously (συμφώνως) teach that the energies are proper to the divine nature (and not to nature itself). They are something other than nature itself, because they are natural powers and προόδοι which flow abundantly. Through them, the Unparticipative by nature becomes synergically participant (ἀναλόγως μεθεκτὸς) in His own creation.[289] The energies and forces are inherent to the divine essence and have—as an inseparable and characterizing part of it—their being from it.[290] Non-created and beginningless, the energies are around nature—they are not nature (περὶ γὰρ τὴν φύσιν οὐ ταῦτα φύσις).[291] Divine energies are not the essence of God but are of the essence and from the essence (τῆς οὐσιας καὶ ἐκ τῆς οὐσιας), for they are not nature, but characteristics of nature (χαρακτηριστικὰ φύσεως).[292] According to the theologians,

282 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 114, 7–9.
283 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 82, 24–25.
284 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 82, 15–16.
285 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 103, 27–33.
286 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 110, 30–32.
287 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 109, 16–17.
288 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 109, 3–4.
289 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 108, 25–109, 1.
290 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 79, 28–30.
291 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 65, 22–26.
292 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 71, 18–24.

from this difference (διακρίσις) alone, one need not be afraid, for the uncreated has the same dignity and represents the unification of those who are distinguished in a good way. Any impious underestimation or overestimation must be rejected.[293] By the indwelling (ἐνοικήσις) of the all-holy Spirit in us, we have become communicants (κοινωνοί) of the divine nature, explains Kokkinos, not because we have entered into communion with the divine nature, but because we have accepted all the grace and energy of God in our hearts.[294]

The quoted passages are sufficient for us to conclude that Philotheus Kokkins clearly established a formal and practical differentiation between essence and energy. The previously cited statement, appealing to the ability to understand them as separate (χωριστῶς) things that cannot be separated (τὰ μὴ χωριστά) at least through the mind (μηδὲ νῷ),[295] obviously does not exhaust Philotheus' view. Throughout his work, he emphasizes—albeit relatively rarely—the purely intellectual understanding of the difference only from within two strictly defined perspectives. In the first case, this is done by emphasizing the unity of Divinity. In the second case, the basic condition for the possibility of conceiving the difference is determined through "at least through the mind" (μηδὲ νῷ) and, in other places, "only through rational action" (μονῳ τῷ λογισμῷ) or "only through the mind" (μονῳ τῷ νῷ), This "μηδὲ νῷ" is the minimum, the elementary basis of the thought process which makes the representation of the problem possible at all. And in this respect, he follows Palamas.[296]

18.2 *Nicholas Kabasilas*

In his treatise on the value of reason Kabasilas introduces an anti-skeptical debate and undertakes a commitment to defend the power of human cognitive ability and human morality. His optimistic theory of knowledge, a Christian version of the Aristotelian one, polemicizes against the epistemology of Nicephorus Gregoras, as well as against the more radical formulations against secular wisdom of some of the representatives of the Palamite position, albeit not explicitly. Human perfection is defined according to knowledge (thanks to the νοῦς) and love (based on volitional disposition—γνώμη). In the present state, however, man can be perfect only in love, not in knowledge. Nevertheless, he emphasizes the high value of secular knowledge. The same position is taken in his text *Against Pyrrhon* and in his major works. The argumentation in his two great books *The Life in Christ* and *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*

293 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 111, 7–11.
294 Kokkinos, Περὶ φωτός, ed. Yaneva, 83, 16–84, 1.
295 Kokkinos, Περὶ θεότητος, ed. Yaneva, 112, 14–15.
296 Cf. Palamas, Capita 150, 81, ed. Christou v, 80, 30–82, 7.

is directed, not only against intellectual mysticism, but also against dogmatic formalism.

Kabasilas maintains an uncompromising Christocentrism, wherein he speaks of no other kind of life apart from the liturgical and sacramental one. From this perspective, it is crucial for him to present the common action of free divine and human activity in detail. In his works, Kabasilas does not specifically deal with the distinction between divine essence and energies and with the usual Palamite themes. Nevertheless, the doctrine of energies underlies his statements.

Power is first considered in terms of its realization, in two ways. On one hand, there is the natural realization of a power (for example, seeing is the natural realization of visual ability); on the other, there is the existential completion of nature, towards which powers must be directed in order for nature to reach its ultimate goal. Kabasilas stresses the value of existence in Christ, that is, in the one power and energy of the Trinity, without undermining Christ's transcendence. Kabasilas owes his place in Byzantine theology primarily to his teaching on the sacraments. According to him, the theology of the sacraments summarizes the entire religious experience. Enlightenment through the mysteries of Christ is the central point and beginning of life in Christ. The sacraments bear the non-created divine energies, that is, the uncreated life of God, which fills up the believer and calls him to new life. Kabasilas discusses more closely three sacraments: baptism, chrismation, and communion. Baptism frees man from his service to Satan and gives him the ability to act in the realm of noetic energies. Being is accepted in baptism, while energy is accepted in chrismation. It allows the growth of new "intellectual senses." The Eucharist remains at the center of the human life. It is the completion of human life and the synthesis of all sacraments. In the Eucharist, Christ imparts His power and makes people gods, albeit not in essence. Through it, Christ gives Himself and people live the same life as Christ. Divine energy is described as love in action, identical with divine life.

Foundational Palamite theses are found in Kabasila's main works. His Christocentric sacramentalism is close to Palamas' teaching, but does not limit itself to it entirely. He demonstrates a path, which starts from Palamas but is not completely confined to his. The already concluded debate is irrelevant to Kabasilas, and he sees no point in reproducing it. He manages to distance himself from the polemics. In any case, the dynamic concept of reality, characteristic of the entire Byzantine tradition, is present in his work. Reality is primarily determined by ἐνέργεια, not by static substance itself. Energy is regarded as the primary characteristic of reality. Kabasilas fundamentally adheres to the tradition that accepts the distinction between essence and natural energies and

interprets liturgy and sacramentology, anthropology, ecclesiology, Christology, and the God-human relationship through it.[297]

18.3 *Callistus Angelicudes*

The *About the book of the Latin Thomas allegedly directed against the pagans* (*καθ' ἑλλήνων*)[298] of Callistus Angelicudes, born around 1325, is his most important writing with regard to our topic. It is the only known Byzantine treatise presenting a refutation of Thomas' theses from the perspective of the Palamite doctrine. Over 641 paragraphs, Callistus relies on the Greek translation of the *Summa contra Gentiles* by Demetrius Cydones. He extracts 2,000 passages of text. 320 paragraphs of his work are dedicated to the distinction between the essence and energies of God.

Callistus rejects the Thomistic type of divine simplicity since the essence of God is unknowable and therefore unnameable. The essence of God is even beyond all simplicity. If God's will and mind were the very divine essence itself, Thomas could not distinguish them, not only in reality (πραγματικῶς), but also conceptually (λόγῳ).[299] The names of God consequently denoted that which is around the essence (περὶ τὴν οὐσίαν).[300] The simplicity of God remains an axiom, but Callistus rejects the thesis that the active potency (δύναμις ἐνεργητική) is identical with the essence, that is, that the essence, power, activity, and being of God must be one and the same.[301] He insists that there is one single and simple divine power (δύναμις), which is the principle (ἀρχή) of God's activity-ἐνέργεια.[302] But the outwardly directed active potency is directed towards a numerically infinite multitude. The one will of God actualizes mul-

297 J. Demetracopoulos, Nicholas Kabasilas' Quaestio de rationis valore: an anti-Palamite defense of secular wisdom, in: *Byzantina*, 19 (1998), 53–93; G. Kapriev, Nicholas Chamaätos Kabasilas, in: *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. H. Lagerlund, Dordrecht–Heidelberg–London–New York 2011, 873–875; M. Đorđević, *Nikolas Kabasilas. Ein Weg zu einer Synthese der Tradition*, Leuven–Paris–Bristol 2015, 39, 48–53, 73–92, 112–115, 149, 175–220; J. Getcha, *La théologie sacramentaire byzantine. Les sacrements chez Nicolas Cabasilas et Syméon de Thessalonique*, Paris 2021.

298 Ορθοδόξη και σχολαστική θεολογία. Κάλλιστου Αγγελικούδη Κατά Θωμά Ακινάτου, εισαγωγή, κείμενον, κριτικό υπόμνημα Σ. Γ. Παπαδόπουλου, Αθήναι 1970 [*Orthodox and Scholastic Theology: Kallistos Angelikoudes against Thomas Aquinas*, ed. S.G. Papadopuls, Athens 1970] (*Contra Thomam*, ed. Papadopoulos).

299 Contra Thomam, 490, ed. Papadopoulos, 249,26–27.

300 Contra Thomam, 502, ed. Papadopoulos, 256, 16. Cf. 503, 256, 18–257, 1; 531, 269, 16–18.

301 Contra Thomam, 224–225, ed. Papadopoulos, 139, 1–24. Cf. 230–231, 141, 9–22.

302 Contra Thomam, 395, ed. Papadopoulos, 207, 31. Cf. 425–429, 219, 26–221, 13, Callistos Angelicoudes, Consolatio 23, 4, in: Callistos Angelicoudès, *Quatre traités hésychastes*, ed. S. Koutsas, Athènes, 1998, 190, 4–17 (ed. Koutsas).

tiple acts of will in relation to countless objects, and the one and simple power of God establishes infinitely many and manifold activities.[303] Callistus speaks of the different "tone" or "intensity" (τόνος) of one and the same power, from which innumerable energies proceed.[304] This power acts in different ways, from which the reality of the diversity of powers (such as wisdom, intellect, providence, goodness, will, etc.) arises. It generates several energies, available outside God as many and varied principles (ἀρχαί).[305]

The dynamic diversity of activity makes possible the distinction between the creative and natural energies of God. The creative power, the will of God, extends to several creative energies that should not be confused with the natural energies of God, that is, with eternal existence. In the act of creation, God simultaneously brings forth form and matter from nothing, which means that matter cannot be defined as "potency" (δύναμις).[306] The being is neither created by the essence nor by the divine power itself, but by the energies of the creative power of God. The created are ἀποτελέσματα, effects of these energies, which should be determined as principles (ἀρχαί) of the ἀποτελέσματα.[307] The effect expresses, not the nature of the cause, but the energy. Only the creative activities of God can be considered and recognized by the creation whose principles they are. The creative will of God is the highest attainable by rational inquiry.[308] In theology, however, only the necessary (τὸ ἀναγκαῖον) is investigated, not the entire capacity of divine power (τὸ δυνατόν), and in philosophizing about this world, divine power can only be touched upon. But God has the power to create many worlds. Even the most precise study of this world is able to achieve only one aspect of divine will.[309]

Essential energy differs from creative activity. It is the existence of God itself, which is usually called "Spirit of God" (Πνεῦμα τοῦ Θεοῦ).[310] Callistus speaks of both the Spirit of God and the Spirit from God (Πνεῦμα τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ).[311] Faithful to tradition, he also thinks this is not about the hypostasis of the Holy Spirit, but about the grace of the whole Trinity and natural divine energy, denoted as holy Spirit (ἅγιον Πνεῦμα). In its being, this Spirit

303 Contra Thomam, 395, ed. Papadopoulos, 207, 30–31.
304 Contra Thomam, 419–420, ed. Papadopoulos, 217, 1–25.
305 Contra Thomam, 436, ed. Papadopoulos, 224, 2–6.
306 Contra Thomam, 414, ed. Papadopoulos, 215, 15–17. Cf. Basilius Magnus, Homiliae in Hexaemeron, 2, 3, in: PG 29, 33B.
307 Contra Thomam, 441, ed. Papadopoulos, 226, 11–19.
308 Contra Thomam, 423, ed. Papadopoulos, 219, 2–3; Cf. 431, 222, 4–7.
309 Contra Thomam, 517, ed. Papadopoulos, 263, 14–28; Cf. 518, 263, 29–33.
310 Contra Thomam, 444, ed. Papadopoulos, 227, 14.
311 Consolatio, 5, 3, ed. Koutsas, 158, 7–11.

does not differ from the creative energy of God. But it is the energy that acts graciously upon rational creatures so that they may be brought to perfection and deification. It imparts to these creatures, not their natural, but a supernatural constitution (κατάστασις), given precisely not to their nature but to their hypostaseis.[312] The eternal and essential energy of God acts upon creation not by virtue of any necessity. Power and movement of the Spirit are granted in consideration of the faith and disposition (πρόθεσις) of the individual rational creature. The teaching on the directed ad extra essential energies is based entirely on Christology.[313] In Christ, the essential energy of God directly fills Christ's human nature. The same energy fills the deified human being in this world.[314]

19 Essential Energy and Accident

Callistus Angelicudes constructs a special argument against the thesis that in existing things, whose potencies are not substances, the potencies must necessarily be accidents. He insists that the property of the natural (τὰ φυσικά) is not the essence itself but is also not an accident of nature because it cannot be removed or replaced.[315] This argument is based on assertions made by both opponents of Palamas and Palamas himself.

Gregory Acindynus discusses the alleged accidential character of the energies in the Palamite interpretation. Palamas was aware, he reflects, that accepting the accidental character of energy would imply some kind of arising and ceasing or expanding and diminishing of the eternal and unchanging divine essence. Therefore, he used the cautious formulation "accidents in some sense" (συμβεβηκότα πως). With this, he sought to indicate simultaneously their belonging to God, that is, their not being created, but also their difference from God's essence. Acindynus evaluates this approach as unsuccessful. He believes that even this cautious mode of expression cannot prevent the assumpttion of

312 Consolatio, 5, 10 ed. Koutsas, 164, 1–4. Cf. 5, 23, 208, 13–17.

313 Contra Thomam, 517–518, ed. Papadopoulos, 263, 14–33.

314 Cf. G. Kapriev, Transzendentalien und Energien. Zwei Modelle mittelalterlicher Philosophie (Thomas von Aquin und Kallistos Angelikudes), in: *Miscellanea Mediaevalia*, Bd. 30, ed. M. Pickavé, Berlin–New York 2003, 433–453; G. Kapriev, Kallistos Angelikudes, in: *Byzanz. Judentum* (Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie, begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg, Die Philosophie des Mittelalters, Bd. 1), eds. A. Brungs, G. Kapriev, V. Mudroch, Basel 2019, 180–183.

315 Contra Thomam, 275–277, ed. Papadopoulos, 158, 26–159, 13. Cf. 485, 247, 17–25, 522–526, 264, 19–31; 266, 1–267, 23.

a real (κατὰ τὸ πρᾶγμα) division in God's being. In reality, the only possible distinction within this unified and unnameable being is a purely conceptual one (κατ' ἐπίνοιαν). In all other cases, God's essence would be understood as disunified and composite because composite is not only what consists of many substances but also what contains properties or non-hypostatic realities related only accidentally to nature, whether called energies, powers, or otherwise.[316]

Palamas insists that the uncreated energy is neither essence (οὐσία) nor accidence (συμβεβηκός), Nicephorus Gregoras explains. Therefore he asks: Since the designation of being is distinguished according to essence and accident, should something that is neither essence nor accident be counted among beings (τῶν ὄντων)? This, he concludes, is the fabulous thing about your new doctrine, dear Palamas, that you believe in non-being (τὸ μὴ ὄν) and worship bare names.[317]

In *Capita 150*, his relative late systematic work, Palamas summarizes the teaching about the energies, answering the main accusations against him. God has (ἔχει) something, he clarifies, which is not essence (ὃ μή ἐστιν οὐσία). This does not mean, however, that it is a contingent attribute (συμβεβηκός): God has no contingent attribute. It is not contingent because it is absolutely unchangeable, but it is also not an essence because it does not belong to that which can subsist independently (τῶν καθ' ἑαυτὸ ὑφεστηκότων ἐστί). From the fact that it is neither accident nor essence, it does not follow that it is non-being or nonexistent. It truly exists (ὡς ἀληθῶς ἐστιν). Some theologians, Palamas points out, call it "accident" in an inauthentic sense. They do so only to emphasize the fact that it is not essence. At this point, Palamas refers to two analogies. The first analogy points to the hypostases. They are also neither essence nor accident of God, but they exist. The same applies to the divine energy of God (ἡ θεία τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐνέργεια). The analogy follows from the fact that neither hypostases nor energy have their own principle of essence (λόγος τῆς οὐσίας). The second analogy is related to the divine will. Since God does not create simply by nature, for then the creative act would have to be necessary, but by His will, one must differentiate between the will (τὸ βούλεσθαι) and the being by nature (τὸ πεφυκέναι). The divine will is thus different from the divine nature (ἡ θεία βουλὴ τῆς θείας φύσεως ἕτερον). The will differs from the nature and is not essence, but it exists and belongs to God, who has not only essence but also will, according

316 J. Demetracopoulos, Gregorios Akindynos, in: *Byzanz. Judentum* (Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie, begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg, Die Philosophie des Mittelalters, Bd. 1), eds. A. Brungs, G. Kapriev, V. Mudroch, Basel 2019, 136–137.

317 Cf. F. Tinnefeld, Zur intellektuellen Polemik des Nikephoros Gregoras, in: *Encyclopedic Trends in Byzantium?*, eds. P. v. Deun, C. Macé, Leuven 2011, 353–354.

to which he creates. If someone wishes, Palamas adds, they can also call the will "accident." However, it is not an 'accident' because it does not involve any composition or difference. God has both essence and non-essence, which is not any acident but divine will and divine energy (βουλὴ καὶ ἐνέργεια).[318] The differentiation of divine will, divine wisdom, providence, and goodness from the divine essence is a recurrent example in the works of Palamas.[319] He also often uses analogies with contingent beings, referring to the differences between the individual and its nature, the common in detail, the limit and the limited. Parallels with the soul and its faculties, with the νοῦς and its thoughts, or knowledge appear particularly often.[320]

20 The Lack of Correctly Formulated Logical Distinction between Essence and Energy

In the context of intellectual developments during the second half of the 14th century, it is not surprising that the sustained articulation of the difference between essence and essential energy remains problematic even among the Palamites profiled here. In an extended article, John A. Demetracopoulos attempts to demonstrate that many pro-Palamites of the 14th and 15th centuries exhibit a compromised theoretical position regarding the formulations presented by Gregory Palamas. Demetracopoulos notes that some among the Palamites of the middle of the 14th century used the concept of ἐπίνοια, as it had been used in the Trinitarian and Christological debates of the 4th and 5th centuries.[321] Other Palamites, he insists, endeavor to express the difference through the Thomistic conceptual framework, established through the translations of Thomas and the philosophical practice of Byzantine Thomists. Some of these authors arrived at inconsistent conceptual ambiguities.[322]

This statement calls for clarification and precision. David Bradshaw's contribution is remarkable in this respect. He shows that the binary scheme (πραγματικῶς—κατ' ἐπίνοιαν) does not work for the Cappadocians either. The fact contrasts with the concept that only the distinction between one that

318 Palamas, Capita 150, 135, ed. Christou V, 111, 14–112, 6.

319 Cf. Palamas, Contra Gregoram, 2, 20, ed. Christou IV, 279, 26–31.

320 Cf. Palamas, De divinis operationibus, 5, ed. Christou II, 100, 9–23.

321 J.A. Demetracopoulos, Palamas Transformed. Palamite Interpretations of the Distinction between God's 'Essence' and 'Energies' in Late Byzantium, in: *Greeks, Latins and Intellectual History 1204–1500*, eds. M. Hinterberger, C. Schabel, Leuven–Paris–Walpole 2011, 283, footnote 56.

322 Ibid, 292–368.

is only conceptualized and one that is "real" can be valid. After a historical overview that runs from Philon of Alexandria, through Origen and Methodius of Olympus with his distinction between three ways—in thought (ἐπινοίᾳ), in actuality (ἐνεργείᾳ) but non-subsistence (ὑποστάσει) and both actuality and subsistence–Bradshaw proves that the Cappadocians used the term ἐπινοίᾳ to designate names based on different activities and relations to real beings. Gregory of Nyssa, for example, clearly maintains that the concepts formed by ἐπινοίᾳ correspond directly to divine activities or operations (ἐνέργειαι). Ἐπινοίᾳ is clearly more than a mere act of human naming. Maximus the Confessor for his part applies the distinction κατ' ἐπίνοιαν in cases where the two items so distinguished cannot exist separately. Bradshaw draws attention to John of Damascus' consideration of the two meanings of ἐπίνοια.[323] It is the latter, the ψιλὴ ἐπίνοια, that points to the combination of sensation and imagination, thereby conceiving something that does not exist in any way and is not contemplated in hypostasis and essence. The former meaning signifies careful thinking through and deliberation, through which what appears simple to the senses turns out to be manifold and varied. His example is man, who seems to be simple, but is recognized through reflection as being composed of two parts, body and soul. The first type of ἐπίνοια is the act of discovering in the object of thought a reality or distinction that is truly there, although thought is needed to identify and clarify it. Bradshaw shows in this context that the Latin tradition also did not stick to the binary scheme of distinction at all. Thomas Aquinas himself neither says nor implies that every distinction must fit into his three categories of real, rational and notional. Palamas, no doubt aware of this ambiguity, seems to have deliberately avoided saying that the distinction of essence and energies is κατ' ἐπίνοιαν, Bradshaw notes. Nonetheless later Palamites freely adopted such language. Precisely what each meant by this must be determined from his own writings, but in general the early Palamites, at least, seem to have adhered quite closely to Palamas's actual meaning, if not to his words.[324]

Gregory Palamas himself refrained from qualifying the distinction by a logical technical vocabulary. Had he done so he would have run into the aporias that Acindynus formulated with regard to the distinction "essence-energy" in

323 Namely in Dialectica, 65, in: ed. Kotter 1, 135, 84–97 (PG 94, 660BC).

324 D. Bradshaw, Essence and Energies: What Kind of Distinction?, in: *Analogia*, 6 (2019), 5–36; D. Bradshaw, In Defense of the Essence/Energies Distinction: A Reply to Critics, in: *Divine Essence and Divine Energies: Ecumenical Reflections on the Presence of God in Eastern Orthodoxy*, ed. C. Athanasopoulos, C. Schneider, Cambridge 2013, 258. Cf. D. Bradshaw, *Divine Energies and Divine Action: Exploring the Essence-Energies Distinction*, St. Paul, Minnesota 2023, 81–117 et 154–155.

respect of the Divinity.[325] Acindynus—and his thesis was continued by a number of 20th century researchers[326]—insisted that the only two distinctions used from the time of the first Greek fathers until his time were a διαφορὰ τῷ πράγματι or πραγματικῶς (*distinctio realis*, distinction according to the subject real distinction) and a διαφορὰ κατ' ἐπίνοιαν (*distinctio rationis*, distinction according to thought). They could not render the difference between essence and essential energy correctly.

Palamas does not bring the distinction between divine essence and energy, between an agent and that agent's activity,[327] into any conceptual scheme. He obviously realized that recourse to the subtle differentiating formulae of Damascene and his predecessors cannot be effective in the context of an impassioned polemic. Therefore, he does not offer a strictly logical, qualified definition of the type of distinction and apparently seems satisfied with the description of "indivisible division" (ἀδιαίρετος διαίρεσις) and "divided unity" (διηρημένη ἕνωσις): God divides indivisibly (ἀδιαιρέτως διαιρεῖται) and unites divisibly (συνάπτεται διηρημένως).[328]

21 George Scholarius and the Definition of Distinction

Only George Scholarius in the Palamite tradition describes the energies as τὶ το πράγματος καὶ ἐν τῷ πράγματι (something belonging to the thing or present in the thing) and defines the distinction between essence and energy as εἰδικὴ διαφορά, i.e. as *distinctio formalis ex parte rei* in the sense of the *distinctio*-formulas of Duns Scotus.[329] Scholarius defines it as a formal (εἰδικῶς) distinction: a distinction according to the form and logos of the τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι.

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325 T. Boiadjiev, Gregorios Akndynos, in: *Byzanz. Judentum* (*Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg, Die Philosophie des Mittelalters, Bd. 1), eds. A. Brungs, G. Kapriev, V. Mudroch, Basel 2019, 136–137.

326 Cf. R.P. Guichardan, *Le problème de la simplicité divine en Orient et en Occident aux XIVe et XVe siècles: Grégoire Palamas, Duns Scot, Georges Scholarios*, Lyon 1933, 41–49; V.V. Grumel, Grégoire Palamas, Duns Scot et Georges Scholarios devant le problème de la simplicité divine, in: *Échos d'Orient*, 34 (1935), 85–87.

327 D. Bradshaw, *Divine Energies and Divine Action: Exploring the Essence-Energies Distinction*, St. Paul, Minnesota 2023, 117.

328 Palamas, Capita 150, 81, ed. Christou v, 81, 25 et 82, 6.

329 Cf. G. Kapriev, Die scotische Unterscheidung von Essenz und Energie bei George Scholarios und die inneren Quellen der palamitischen Tradition, in: *Contemplation and Philosophy: Scholastic and Mystical Modes of Medieval Philosophical Thought. A tribute to Kent Emery, Jr.*, eds. Roberto Hofmeister Pich, Andreas Speer, Leiden 2018, 129–154.

George Sholarius (known from 1454 as Gennadius II, Patriarch of Constantinople), translator of writings by Thomas Aquinas, Radulphus Britos, Petrus Hispanus, has been presented as a "Byzantine Thomist" and even as "the greatest among the Byzantine Thomists" since the 1930s,[330] even though from 1445 he was leader of the Palamite "party" in Constantinople. He is consistently classified among the Thomists in Byzantium,[331] although it was noticed quite early on that he was open to multiple schools, albeit influenced by them to a very limited extent.[332] In his treatises dedicated to the topic, Scholarius presents his position by using terminology comprehensible to Occidental Scholasticism.[333]

At the same time, he categorically states that he thinks within Palamas' paradigm. He is the only authority repeatedly mentioned in connection with the essence-energy problem.[334] All others are mentioned collectively as "the ancient teachers of our church." "The holy Gregory of Thessaloniki", according to Scholarius, is the one who has presented an adequate way (τρόπος)—based on the dogmas of the Church of Christ—of distinguishing between the essence of God and His energy. The entire church should learn from he who stands in harmony with earlier teachers. Saint Gregory and the old teachers of our Church have said that essence and energy differ πραγματικῶς, without asserting that the energies are πράγματα in the proper sense, Sholarius stresses.

As the starting point for his interpretation of the distinction between the divine essence and its energy, Scholarius lists six assumptions. The first one states: "The divine essence is infinite (unlimited—ἄπειρος)." Secondly, it is

330 G. Podskalsky, *Theologie und Philosophie in Byzanz*. München 1977, 179. "Byzantine Thomism reached its peak with George Scholarios"—J. Demetracopoulos, Demetrios Kydones, in: *Byzanz. Judentum* (Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie, begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg, Die Philosophie des Mittelalters, Bd. 1), eds. A. Brungs, G. Kapriev, V. Mudroch, Basel 2019, 164.

331 Cf. J.A. Demetracopoulos, Philosophy and Christianity in George Scholarios—Gennadios II: An Overview of the Main Issues, in: *Philosophia*, 47 (2017), 243–268.

332 Cf. R.P. Guichardan, *Le problème de la simplicité divine en Orient et en Occident aux XIVe et XVe siècles: Grégoire Palamas, Duns Scot, Georges Scholarios*, Lyon 1933, 183–184.

333 I focus on the analysis of three points: Chapter 94 of his commentary on *De ente et essentia* of Thomas Aquinas in translation (*Commentarius in De ente et essentia* [= Commentarius], in *Oeuvres complètes de Gennade Scholarios* (OCGS), eds. L. Petit, X.A. Sidéridès, M. Jugie, t. 6, Paris 1933), chapters 6, 10, and 11 of his work against the followers of Acindynus (*Contra Acindynistas*, in OCGS 3) and the tractate about the difference between the divine essence and its energy (*Distinctio inter essentiam divinam et suas operationes* [= Distinctio], in OCGS 3). It is assumed that the former two writings have been written in1445 and the latter in 1458.

334 Cf. e.g. Scholarius, Contra Acindynistas, 6, in: OCGS 3, 214, 19–25; Commentarius, 94, in: OCGS 6, 282, 28–29; 284, 8 = 9; 285, 4–14.

asserted that each of the two, both essence and energy, is a πρᾶγμα, each of them is a "thing." Educated in the Latin conceptual tradition, Scholarios explains that the divine energy, whether internal (ἡ ἔνδον) or external (ἡ ἔξω), is not a πρᾶγμα in the proper sense of the word, as is the essence of God, but is rather τὶ τοῦ πράγματος καὶ ἐν τῷ πράγματι ("something that belongs to the thing" or "something that is in the thing"). Therefore, energy is something having something of the thing, which is deeply related to the τὸ τί ἐστι of the thing, and is located in the thing. Scholarius observes that the divine energy is neither something indivisible (ἄτομος) which exists apart from the essence nor something separated from the divine essence. Essence and energy could be parts of a whole, but not in the case of the Divine, which is indivisible. They could still also be potentially (ἐν δυνάμει) present. God, however, is fully actual. There is no potential in him. The essence and the energy of God are thus actual and in a perfect way. Sixthly, Scholarios emphasizes that, unlike any other beings, the being of God is absolutely necessary. There is no prior or posterior (προτερόν τε καὶ ὕστερον) in God by nature. Therefore, God is in no way composite: neither with regard to the principle of essence (λόγος τῆς οὐσίας), nor with regard to the location (μέρος) of energy.[335]

In this regard, it is crucially important for Scholarius that nothing can be predicted about God accidentally (τοῦ δὲ Θεοῦ συμβεβεκὸς μὲν οὐδὲν κατηγορεῖσθαι δύναται). It is also important for him to maintain the distinction between the essential and creative energies of God, that is, the paradigms acting as the causes of created beings. The creative divine acts are named after their results due to the participation of the created in them. However, Scholarius asks, how is it with divine wisdom, goodness, and similar powers? Names like "wise," "good," etc., are inherent in God not episodically (ἐπεισοδιώδη), but they denote God's αὐτοσοφία, αὐτοαγαθότητα, αὐτοδύναμις, that is, the essential powers of God, whereby the difference (διάκρισις) of the names follows their own truth. Names like "wise" and "good" are names of His perfection or energy.[336]

In order to clarify the distinction, Scholarius discusses one alternative regarding God and the names of God: whether it is a question of πραγματικὴ διαφορά (*distinctio realis*, real distinction) or only of conceptual distinction (*distinctio rationis tantum*), where our intellect (νοῦς) recognizes both designation and division (διάκρισις).[337] Thus, he asserts that every διάκρισις is either πραγματική or κατ' ἐπίνοιαν. He interprets the πραγματική as Gregory Palamas' solution

335 Scholarius, Commentarius, 94, in: OCGS 4, 281, 5–24.
336 Scholarius, Distinctio, 4, in: OCGS 3, 233, 1–234, 30.
337 Scholarius, Distinctio, 3, in: OCGS 3, 231, 14–19.

and the κατ' ἐπίνοιαν μόνην as Barlaam and Acindynus' solution. He branded the latter the opposite of truth. However, the two kinds of distinction are multifaceted and manifest different tropes[338]

Scholarius sharply opposes the interpretation of the distinction between essence and energy as a distinction made by reason (λόγος) alone, i.e. through thought (ἐπινοίᾳ), which Barlaam and Acindynus insisted on, both in his commentary on *De ente et essentia* and in *Contra Acindynistas*. He rejects the claim that this distinction is formed only in the soul based on thoughts of second intention (δεύτεραι ἐπίνοιαι) with no direct correspondence on the side of the object. These assertions, directly identified as heresies, are not only false but also impossible.[339]

Scholarius deals with the question of how far the energies can and should be called "things" (πράγματα) in detail. The starting point is that each of the divine energies is a πρᾶγμα in God, just as each of the hypostases is a πρᾶγμα not by thought. Similarly, it is said that the divine essence is a πρᾶγμα, which refined thought distinguishes from that which belongs to the thing and is in the thing (τὶ τοῦ πράγματος κἀν τῷ πράγματι).[340] Each of the divine energies, Scholarius further insists, is therefore something (πρᾶγμά τι) in the one and simple πρᾶγμα of the divine essence, and each of them has its λόγος, which reveals the so-being (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι). The energies differ in fact and formally (ἔργῳ τε καὶ εἰδικῶς), not only among themselves, but also from the divine essence. They differ according to whatness (τῷ τί ἐστιν). They are distinguished, not only according to our thoughts, but also according to the powerful and distinctive truth. It is a mistake to say that they are different only verbally, that is, according to human thought.[341]

In his commentary on *De ente et essentia*, Scholarius clarifies his conception in dealing with Thomas Aquinas. He asserts that, in their differentiation,

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338 Scholarius, Distinctio, 1, in: OCGS 3, 228, 19–21; 28–33. The strongest variant of πραγματικὴ διάκρισις is the differentiation between God and creation, which encompasses differences both in essence and in properties. Weaker forms include the classification of genera into species, followed by the differentiation among individuals of the same species (which differ only numerically, not in essence), and the weakest form involves the distinction between essence and its properties (συμβεβηκότα). All these types of differentiations are referred to as real distinctions—ibid, 229, 1–25. The κατ' ἐπίνοιαν διάκρισις is summarised as a distinction that ontologically belongs only to thought and is attributed to secondary intentions of the intellect (δεύτερα νοητά). In this case, the difference is not real (ἐν δὲ τῷ πράγματι οὐκ εἰσίν)—Distinctio, 2, in: OCGS 3, 230, 1–11.

339 *Commentarius* 94, in OCGS 6, 281, 28–282, 17; Contra Acindynistas, 6, in: OCGS, t. III, 215, 1–9.

340 Scholarius, Distinctio, 6, in: OCGS 3, 238, 21–26.

341 Ibid., 238, 29–239, 4.

the divine essence and energy manifest themselves not as two things but as two states of the thing (οὐ δύο πράγματα ἀλλὰ δύο τινά), which belong to the one thing and are in the thing. There is a great difference, he insists, between speaking about two things or about δύο τινά, τοῦ τε πράγματος ὄντα καὶ ἐν τῷ πράγματι. In the latter case, there is differentiation both by the power of reason and according to the nature of the thing and not only by reason, i.e., thought. It is subject to twofold determination. Indeed, the differentiation is made by the soul, but this does not imply the rejection of the difference in the object. From the fact that God is simple, it does not follow that it is wrong for the *nous* to differentiate between essence and energy.[342] Although all distinctions of this kind stand above the πραγματικὴ διάκρισις, Scholarius explains here, they are called real (πραγματικάς), i.e. they are considered under the notion of πραγματικός.[343] He expresses the opinion that Barlaam and Acindynus' position is a result of their encounter with Thomas's books in Greek translation.[344] Scholarius concludes that, because Holy Gregory of Thessaloniki and the ancient teachers of the Byzantine Church recognised this disagreement, they argued that the essence and energy of God are truly (πραγματικῶς) different from each other, yet the energies are not πράγματα in the true sense. In this case, we are talking about τὶ τοῦ πράγματος καὶ ἐν τῷ πράγματι. Essence and energy are not only intellectually differentiated.[345]

Scholarius explains, in accordance with Basil, that the principle (λόγος) of energy is not identical with that of the essence. This is evident both by definition (ὁρισμός) and the nature of things. Due to the simple and incorporeal divine nature, the energy assumes a mode of existence (τρόπος τῆς ὑπάρξεως) common to both. The entire dignity (πᾶν ἀξίωμα) that belongs to essence is transferred onto energy. Because it is inherent in the divine nature to be infinite, uncreated, and eternal, its energy must be defined as such. In God, the energy belongs to the same order as divine nature. In the case of created beings, it is different. Here, the essential energies conceptually belong to the realm of property (συμβεβηκός).[346]

The energy exists due to the essence (μετὰ τῆς οὐσίας ὕπαρξιν ἔχειν) and is extant as something which belongs to the unlimited. Since energy has the same mode of existence as essence, i.e., the existence of the strictly necessary divine simplicity, both essence and energy are something infinite and they are

342 Scholarius, Commentarius, 94, in: OCGS 6, 283, 20–28.
343 Ibid., 283, 33–35.
344 Ibid., 282, 35–283, 19.
345 Ibid., 285, 4–14.
346 Ibid. 11, 225, 31–226, 5.

God. For this reason, formal distinction (εἰδικὴ διάκρισις) cannot be credited with introducing the division of things or composition because this distinction assumes that essence and energy are based on the same substrate and super-simple divine nature.[347] Divine essence and energy differ formally (εἰδικῶς). The distinction essence-energy is neither πραγματικῶς, nor, according to our thought, because it is a distinction according to the form and logos of τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι.[348]

As already mentioned, Scholarius identifies the positions of Barlaam and Acindynus as having been influenced by Thomas Aquinas. According to Scholarius, Thomas insists that the essence and energies of God must be distinguished not truly (πραγματικῶς), but only in thinking (λόγῳ). Since the distinction is a distinction in thought, Thomas did not consider the distinction a formal one (εἰδικὴ [διαφορά]) which refers to the nature of the thing. To the extent that it differs from the real and is not as powerful as it, he believed that it is κατ' ἐπίνοιαν, Scholarius concludes. Armed with the wisdom of Thomas, Barlaam and Acindynus turned against the Eastern-Roman Church, he asserts. In doing so, they did not notice that many of the Latin teachers agree with St. Gregory of Thessaloniki, and consider these issues "in a way similar to the view of our Church."[349] In the prologue of his commentary on *De ente et essentia*, he defines these Latin teachers more specifically, by explaining that some of the later Latin thinkers are more Orthodox than Thomas and "closer to us and to the truth." He emphasizes that these are the ones who gather around Master John Scotus.[350]

The parallels between Scholarius' approach and Scotian metaphysical logic are evident. In the case of *distinctio formalis*,[351] one can detect it both in terms of content and language. The direct influence of Scotus on Scholarius has been a matter of dispute for a long time. Christiaan W. Kappes convincingly identifies the translations by Prochorus Cydonis[352] of the works of the Dominican Hervaeus Natalis, who uses Scotistic figures in specific cases, as the only writ-

347 Ibid., 226, 5–16.

348 Scholarius, Commentarius, 94, in: OCGS 4, 284, 31–36.

349 Scholarius, Commentarius, 94, in: OCGS 6, 282, 35–283, 19; 284, 2–5.

350 Scholarius, Commentarius, Prooemium, in: OCGS 6, 180, 33–35.

351 Cf. О. Георгиев, Джон Дънс Скот. Distinctio formalis [O. Georgiev, John Duns Scotus. Distinctio formalis—Bulgarian], in: *Архив за средновековна философия и култура*, 10 (2004), 212–227; J.A. Aertsen, *Mediaeval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought. From Philip the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Suárez*, Leiden–Boston 2012, 422–426.

352 Excerpts from Book II of his commentary on the *Sentences* and his *Quaestiones quodlibetatles*.

ten "link" between Scotus and Scholarius.[353] Hervaeus assumes this role due to his interpretation of the being-expressions of the Trinity and the application of the *distinctio formalis in divinis ex parte rei* (in contrast to the *distinctio rationalis*). He distinguished between the essence of God and the attributes by not understanding the divine attributes as *res* but as *formalitates* that permeate the divine essence and attributes. Hervaeus draws a fundamental difference between the reality and formality of things. Along with several other coincidences, Scholarius is close to Hervaeus even in his vocabulary and phraseology when justifying the *distinctio formalis ex parte rei*.[354] It must be concluded that, in an indirectly non-binding manner, Scholarius was familiar with contemporary scholasticism's logical approaches, using these "sublime methods"[355] instrumentally and remaining in agreement with them. He uses them selectively, without being associated with any of the major scholastic schools.

An unbiased and non-anachronistic reading of the texts of Palamas and Scholarius leads to the conclusion that both positions are identical in content. Even their conceptual figures and analogies coincide. In this regard, Scholarius also exhibits a sharper eye than his interpreters when he cites Palamas as his main authority without hesitation. However, there are differences in the realm of the formal, i.e., in the manner of formulation on one hand, and the understanding of certain concepts on the other, and these require interpretation. As a first step in this direction, it is necessary to assume that Gregory Palamas expresses himself on the basis of traditional terms and their corresponding logical tools, without having known of the Scholastic tradition. Historically speaking, he should not have even been familiar with the first Greek translations of Thomas Aquinas. Among the Palamite thinkers, Scholarius was the one who was most familiar with Western developments in metaphysical logic. The comparison of the positions of Scholarius and Palamas shows that Scholarius employs both Thomistic and Scotistic refinements for the purpose of a disciplinarily precise and comprehensible formulation, including the true Palamite position, for Western cultural consumption.

Parallel to Orthodoxy in general, Scholar recognizes the Palamite tradition and the lines of Orthodox theology stemming from it as his motivational basis. Another basis for his approach was East-West intellectual dialogue. His attitude towards the Latin cultural and philosophical tradition should be characterized as "committed reception." It is characterized by advocacy for the Eastern

353 C.W. Kappes, The Latin Sources of the Palamite Theology of George-Gennadius Scholarius, in: *Nicolaus. Rivista die teologia ecunenico-patristica*, 40 (2013), 95–98.

354 Cf. ibid., 95–113.

355 Scholarius, Contra Acindynistas, 6, in: OCGS 3, 215, 33–34.

Roman tradition, but remains open to incorporating the achievements of contemporary Latin culture. Scholarius only regarded possible shifts and confusions in dogmatics as a potential danger that might emanate from Scholasticism. He asserts philosophical logic to be universal. He perceives the opposition between East and West, not as a confrontation between two cultures, but as a competition between two traditions of a single culture which he considered to be compatible and complementary.

It was not Scholarius' intention to reject or change Palamite arguments or to propose a "softer" version of the distinction between essence and energy produced by Palamas. On the contrary, he remained quite faithful to Palamas' actual position, not only in name, but also in fact. However, he offered a "translation" of the theses of Palamas into the language of Occidental Scholasticism and, in particular, of Scotisitc logic, whose procedures he considered to be methodically more precise. One must admit that Palamas operates with a very different conceptual framework than Scotus.[356] In view of this, Scholarius at least tries to construct a more subtle formulation, no longer dependent on the Byzantine debates of the 14th century and their language.

22 Perichoresis and Synergy

The conception of being as a dynamic network presupposes that it endures by virtue of a permanent exchange of energies and a mutual energetic interpenetration (περιχώρησις) of beings. This explains existential participation.

The Stoic-origin concept of περιχώρησις is brought into use by Maximus the Confessor in connection with the hypostatic unification of the two natures of Christ. These natures, which preserve their essential properties and undergo no transformation, are united by their mutual interpenetration.[357] Unification occurs thanks to the mutual exchange (ἀντίδοσις) of essential energies, through which each of the two natures aquires natural properties from the other.[358] He denotes through περιχώρησις the mutual penetration of the two natures with their properties and energies, wherein the two natures do not lose their mutual "otherness."[359] Human nature is not absorbed, but it enters into co-action (συν-

356 D. Bradshaw, *Divine Energies and Divine Action: Exploring the Essence-Energies Distinction*, St. Paul, Minnesota 2023, 116.

357 J.-C. Larchet, *La divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris 1996, 327.

358 Cf. Maximus, Pyrrh., in: PG 91, 296D–297A.

359 Cf. e.g. Maximus, Amb Th, 5, in: PG 91, 1053B; ThPol, 16, in: PG 91, 208AB; Pyrrh., in: PG 91, 337CD.

ἐργεία) with divine nature. As a result, it becomes divinized in its powers and energies and begins to act in a way that is supernatural to it.[360] This state affects both the spiritual and physical dimensions.[361]

For John Damascene, the concept of περιχώρησις acquires the function of a universal explanatory mechanism, which can and should be used in triadology and Christology as well as in anthropology and sacramentology. Each of the two natures, he notes in the Christological context, interchanges properties because of the identity of the hypostasis and the interpenetration (περιχώρησις) of natures.[362] This interchange (ἀντίδοσις) should not be understood as mixing or changing the essences themselves and their properties. It occurs at the level of energies. Just as in hypostatic union, the soul of Christ, while remaining a soul, enriches itself with divine knowledge, so too the flesh, without losing its natural properties, is enriched with divine energies: while retaining its mortality, it becomes life-giving (ζωοποιὸς σάρξ). In perichoresis, the flesh, without ceasing to be flesh but participating energetically in Divinity, is deified, becoming one with God.[363] For later Byzantine thinkers, the model of energetic περιχώρησις at all levels of being is already evident as a means of explanation. This is also the case with Michael Psellus.

Both the relation of the intellect to the soul and the human intellect to the divine νοῦς are interpreted by him as participation. But how does the participation-μέθεξις occur? Does it exist through a relation, or through energetic penetration, or in some other way? The mutual περιχώρησις of the natures (in the hypostasis of Christ, for example) flows through the essential powers and energies, wherein consists the τρόπος τῆς ἀντιδόσεως ἑκατέρας φύσεως—the mode of exchange between the two natures.[364] The same model can be found in the transition of the bodily πάθη into the soul. They do not enter into the essence of the incorporeal soul, but they are applied to its powers and energies.[365] For this reason soul and body remain differentiated by their essences, but their common activity-ἐνέργεια is a combined one. Therefore, psychosomatic relations are about the effective acquisition of essential qualities and not about a transformation of essences.[366]

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360 AmbTh, 5, in: PG 91, 1053B.

361 AmbTh., 3, in: PG 91, 1042C.

362 Expositio fidei, III, 3–4, in: *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, Bd. 2, ed. B. Kotter, Berlin–New York 1973 (ed. Kotter 2), 115, 75–118, 42 (PG 94, 993C–1000A).

363 Expositio fidei, III, 17; III, 21, in: ed. Kotter 2, 155, 3–156, 23 (PG 94,1068B–1069B).

364 Psellus, Omnifaria doctrina, 12, ed. Westerink, 22, 31–37.

365 Psellus, Omnifaria doctrina, 33, ed. Westerink, 31, 10–14.

366 Psellus, Omnifaria doctrina, 34, ed. Westerink, 32, 2–13.

However, it is not about a mechanical and uniform way of exchanging existential energies. It is indeed an axiom that the divine essential energies penetrate the whole of creation. Nevertheless, their expression is not necessarily linked to the presence of the created world. They act regardless of whether creation exists or not.[367] Divine energies have never begun to exist and nothing is older than them.[368] Participation in these energies proceeds differently due to the varied nature of beings.

Ernesto Sergio Mainoldi, interpreting chapter five of *De divine nominbus* and chapter four of *De coelesti hierarchia* of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, discusses the ontological paradigm of the different ways of participating in divine energies. Dionysius distinguishes between inanimate beings, participating in God's being through their own being and existence, living beings, who participate through their being and life in the divine life-giving power, and rational and noetic beings, which can also participate in perfected wisdom. Beings that participate in them in the most ways are closest to Divinity.[369] The order of beings is presented as participation in the divine essence, life and wisdom—οὐσία, ζωή and σοφία. Beings belonging to different classes receive the divine energies according to their specific receptive capacity. Within the framework of the corresponding class, the participation in divine energies is a hypostatic one, where the appropriation of energies does not entail any change in the ontological status of the individuals.[370]

This concept remains valid within the tradition. The soul of every irrational animal constitutes life for the body which it animates, remarks Gregory Palamas, for example. The soul of the irrational being does not possess anything other than its activities via the body. Therefore, he concludes, animals do not possess life essentially, but as activity-ἐνέργεια, since this life depends on something else and is not self-subsistent. Life dependent on something else cannot be called essential. Hence, the soul of the animal necessarily perishes with the passing of the body. It is no less mortal than the body.[371] Every rational and noetic nature, on the other hand, possesses life essentially, wherein it exists as immortal and indestructible.

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367 Palamas, Theophanes, 8 and 26, ed. Christou II, 229, 28–230, 7 and 253, 18–21.

368 Palamas, Triades, 3, 2, 20, ed. Christou I, 672, 20–24.

369 Cf. CH, 4, 1, ed. Heil/Ritter, 20, 17–20.

370 E.S. Mainoldi, The place of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* in the Development of the Byzantine Canon of Ontology, in: *The Dionysian Traditions* (Rencontres de Philosophie Médiévale 23), ed. G. Kapriev, Turnhout 2021, 59–60.

371 Palamas, Capita 150, 31, ed. Christou V, 51, 27–31.

The soul of every human being is also the life of the body it animates, and it possesses a life-giving activity directed towards something else, namely the body which it vivifies. The human soul possesses life, not only essentially, but also as energy, because it gives life to the body connected with it. The soul possesses life not only as an activity, but also essentially, since it lives in its own right. It possesses, moreover, a rational and noetic life, which significantly differs from the body and its physical phenomena. Therefore, the soul does not die together with the body.[372] The noetic and rational soul, created bound to the body, receives the spirit from God as life-giving (ζωοποιὸν πνεῦμα). The spirit of man, vivifying the body, is noetic Eros. Through it, the soul is in a loving relation with its body, which it never wants to leave.[373] The noetic nature of the angels, on the other hand, which also possesses the powers νοῦς, λόγος and πνεῦμα, does not possess life as energy of this sort, for it has not received an earthly body from God.[374] The human soul, which alone possesses mind, reason, and life-giving spirit, is thus created in the image of God to a higher degree, surpassing even that of bodiless angels. This higher dignity has not been tarnished even by ancestral sin.[375]

The character of the Hesychast controversy focuses attention on the essential energies of God and man. The concept of "life" comes to the forefront. The essence of God and the divine essential energy are modes of the same divine life. Energy is the outwardly manifested life of the three divine hypostases in their coherence and coexistence.[376] For its part, human essential energy expresses the authentic life of man. Thanks to perichoresis, it is able to transform human existence in coherence with the divine one. It can bring forth a new mode of existence for human nature.

According to the contested doctrine of Palamas, the natural energy of God can be perceived graciously by the worthy, that is, by the saints, even in this life, without thereby becoming gods by nature. Participation in this activity is the divinization that can be attained in this world.[377] The deified one remains

372 Palamas, Capita 150, 32, ed. Christou V, 52, 3–12.

373 Palamas, Capita 150, 38, ed. Christou V, 56, 15–25.

374 Palamas, Capita 150, 30, ed. Christou V, 51, 10–20; Capita 150, 38, ed. Christou V, 56, 1–15.

375 Palamas, Capita 150, 39, ed. Christou V, 56, 26–57, 6.

376 J. Lison, *L'Esprit répandu. La Pneumatologie de Gregoire Palamas*, Paris 1994, 76; N. Loudovikos, *Analogical Identities: The Creation of the Christian Self. Beyond Spirituality and Mysticism in the Patrisitc Era*, Turnhout 2019, 349; S. Tanev, *Energy in Orthodox Theology & Physics. From Controversy to Encounter*, Eugene, Oregon 2017, 5.

377 Palamas, Triades, 3, 3, 7, ed. Christou I, 685, 18–686, 6.

entirely human by nature—both mentally and bodily—, but by virtue of grace he becomes, to a certain extent, both mentally and bodily divine in his activity, that is, in his existence.[378]

Merely by his own strength, through imitation (μίμησις) and his own reference (σχέσις), without the grace of the Spirit, man is not able to reach a true unification with God. Conversely, deification cannot take place without man's commitment. Knowledge of God and participation in God always require agreement (κατ' ἀναλογίαν) with the measure of the dignity of the concrete human being. The measure (μέτρον) according to which the energy is bestowed is the personal measure of the one receiving it.[379] The divine disposition (ἕξις θεία)[380] is, according to Palamas, a result of the synergy between grace and human effort.

As equally clear to Palamas as the actuality of deification in this world is its incompleteness, because even the saint cannot consistently be infallible on this earth, he asserts. Knowledge of God here is not simply and perfectly achieved but is rather some kind of advance (ἀρραβών) towards the intellectual light in its fullness.[381] The incarnation of Christ initiates human redemption and divinization without bringing them to completion. Transformation becomes irreversible only with the resurrection of the dead. Palamas even insists that beyond this world there will be a continuous movement towards ever more perfect knowledge of God.[382]

23 Callsitus Angelicudes: Essential Energy and Hypostasis

Callistus Angelicudes draws a strict distinction between ontological causality and participation in divine essential energy. He rejects the opinion that creation participates in divine goodness in the same way it resembles God, being an effect of the action of the first cause.[383] Participation is not a causal and not an accidental relation. Divine goodness, i.e. the uncreated energy which springs

378 Palamas, Contra Acindynum, 3, 6, 16, ed. Christou III, 173, 8–19.

379 Palamas, Homilia 36, in: PG 151, 448B.

380 Palamas, Triades, 2, 3, 77, ed. Christou I, 610, 5–7.

381 Palamas, Triades, 1, 3, 10, ed. Christou I, 420, 18–27.

382 Palamas, Triades, 2, 2, 11, ed. Christou I, 517, 13–28. Cf. G. Kapriev, Gregorios Palamas, in: *Byzanz. Judentum* (Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie, begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg, Die Philosophie des Mittelalters, Bd. 1), eds. A. Brungs, G. Kapriev, V. Mudroch, Basel 2019, 152–154.

383 Callistus Angelicudes, Contra Thomam, 452–454, ed. Papadopoulos, 230, 21–231, 28.

from the essence of God, is accessible for participation.[384] Callistus criticizes the view that the goodness of being shows itself causally, as a final cause. It does not belong to the energies that are ἀρχαί for the being of the created but precedes the causes of being, he stresses.[385]

Participation in God is not participation in God's essence, as Thomas Aquinas also demonstrates. Furthemore, it is not a result of any natural human aspiration (ἔφεσις), supposed to be proper to all people. It does not proceed by necessity.[386] Creation possesses it through grace and mediation (κατὰ χάριν καὶ μετάδοσιν).[387] Attaining the perfect Good, which is God, requires the good will of the person and their good deeds, but it is not achieved by the power of intellect and will; it is bestowed by the Spirit of God in communication and union with that Spirit.[388]

Unlike the natural light of intellect, the light of the good Spirit (ἀγαθοῦ Πνεύματος) shines not according to the measure of the nature of the participant but according to the measure of their hypostasis, κατ' ὑπόστασιν.[389] This participation has a strictly hypostatic character. One and the same Spirit is bestowed upon each according to their peculiarities, according to the time, manner, quality, and scope, as the Spirit himself wills.[390]

The participant lives the life of God Himself and that in a common relation-σχέσις with God.[391] The grace that acts in a person as a power inherent in hypostasis (δύναμις ἐνύποστατος)[392] does not transform human nature but infuses the eternal energy of the living God into the heart of the person, so that there is no act performed by the person in receipt of grace in which this grace does not act.[393] The soul retains its natural way of thinking (φρόνημα) and everything necessarily connected with it.[394] However, the entire mind (νοῦς)

384 Angelicudes, Contra Thomam, 240; 315; 470, ed. Papadopoulos, 145, 11–22; 174, 18–27; 238, 17–25.

385 Angelicudes, Contra Thomam, 441 et 532, ed. Papadopoulos, 226, 11–19 et 270, 11–14.

386 Angelicudes, Contra Thomam, 318 et 516, ed. Papadopoulos, 175, 28–176, 5 et 263, 1–4.

387 Angelicudes, Contra Thomam, 548, ed. Papadopoulos, 277, 32–35.

388 Angelicudes, Contra Thomam, 280–282, ed. Papadopoulos, 160, 4–161, 9. Angelicudes, Consolatio, 23, 9, in: Callistos Angelicoudès, Quatre traités hésychastes, ed. S. Koutsas, 198, 3–5.

389 Angelicudes, Contra Thomam, 501, ed. Papadopoulos, 255, 22–23.

390 Angelicudes, Consolatio, 5, 21; 5, 27; 23, 8, ed. Koutsas, 176, 8–24; 184, 3–4; 196, 2–198, 30. Cf. Joh. 14, 26; 1 Cor. 12, 11.

391 Angelicudes, Contra Thomam, 548, ed. Papadopoulos, 277, 32–35.

392 Angelicudes, Consolatio, 5, 10, ed. Koutsas, 164, 8.

393 Angelicudes, Contra Thomam, 480–481, ed. Papadopoulos, 245, 1–24. Angelicudes, Consolatio, 5, 15 et 23, 14, ed. Koutsas, 168, 16–17 et 208, 13–17.

394 Angelicudes, Consolatio, 5, 11, ed. Koutsas, 164, 10–11.

of the soul is encommpassed by this divine power in a noetic movement that embraces all other powers of the soul.[395] The νοῦς acquires a new relation (σχέσις) and a new dwelling (κατοχή).[396] God makes those who participate in Him, the πνευματικοί, holy: they are of one mind (σύμπνοι) with God.[397]

They also act together with God. Every result of action, of "practice," is a consequence of the realization of the capability corresponding to a specific nature.[398] They exert influence on other humans and on non-human hypostases with their simultaneously human and divine power. They transform the world. It can be said that a person filled with divine energy is called to be a co-worker with God (Θεοῦ συνεργός), a co-creator who reshapes themselves and the world, acting together with God.[399]

The different modes of expression of essential energies should not be neglected. Nevertheless, it should be reiterated that this concerns, not only rational beings, but all natures represented in hypostases throughout the universe. The network of this all-encompassing and non-homogeneous structure forms the reality of actual being. The tradition constantly emphasizes that existential energy is ontologically inherent to the essence (or nature) and not to the hypostasis or person.[400] It is precisely from this horizon that the question arises regarding differences in the intensity, concentration, or quality of the expression of the energies, which are established in all beings and especially in representatives of living beings, and most notably in rational natures.

Maximus the Confessor summarizes the theme from the perspective of anthropology. He draws a distinction between the essential energy's mode of expression and its origin. Energy is possessed by nature. Each of us acts (ἐνεργεῖ) initially (προηγουμένως), he reflects, as something that is (τι ὤν), i.e., as a human being and not as someone, for example as Peter or Paul. The individual human being shapes the mode of action (τὸν τῆς ενεργείας σχηματίζει τρόπον), such as amplification or limitation, according to his gnomic will (κατὰ γνώμην). It follows that differentiation between persons is recognized based on their mode of

395 Angelicudes, Consolatio, 5, 15, ed. Koutsas, 168, 5–8.

396 Angelicudes, Consolatio, 23, 15, ed. Koutsas, 208, 2–3.

397 Angelicudes, Consolatio, 5, 4, ed. Koutsas, 158, 11–13.

398 В.М. Лурье, *История византийской философии. Формативний период*, Москва 2006 [B.M. Lourié, *The History of Byzantine Philosophy: The Formative Period*, St. Petersburg 2006—Russian], 389–390.

399 Cf. S. Tanev, Man as Co-creator: Reflections on the Theological Insight of St. Maximus the Confessor within a Contemporary Interdisciplinary Context, in: *Maximus the Confessor as a European Philosopher*, eds. S. Mitralexis et al., Eugene, Oregon 2017, 255–258.

400 Cf. J.-C. Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines: des origines à saint Jean Damascène*, Paris 2010, 347–350.

action according to their practice (πρᾶξις). The invariability (τὸ ἀπαράλλακτον) of natural energy has its place in the principle (ἐν δὲ τῷ λόγῳ) of that nature.[401]

From here arise several crucial questions. If the hypostasis manifests natural energies, how precisely does it do so in a hypostatically unique manner? Or: how and in what sense can we claim that the specific way the natural energies manifest depends on some unique hypostasis? On what grounds can it be said that existential energies can vary in intensity—not only in different hypostases but also in one and the same hypostasis according to its existential states and in its different temporal periods? The answer to these questions is paradigmatically given by Maximus the Confessor. Hypostatic uniqueness can be explained through the concept of ἕξις. It defines the hypostatic factor in the manifestation of natural energies.

24 Hexis—the Hypostasizing Factor

Nemesius of Emesa already introduces the term ἕξις regarding this issue. Not God, but the human being is to blame for its wickedness, he explains. The energies, i.e. the activities, producing virtues or vices, come from man himself. These actions are not a direct continuation of the powers (δυνάμεις—faculties, abilities) belonging to human nature. They are derived through the ἕξεις, which in turn are formed by virtue of the exercise of free will decision—προαίρεσις. The ἕξεις come forth from us, through us and because of us. They are conceived as stable internal states, or dispositions, which mediate power and energy as hypostasizing factors. Nemesius describes ἕξις as φύσις ἐπίκτητος, acquired nature, which is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, dependent on us, as it is acquired through learning and ethos (μάθησις καὶ ἔθος), and is therefore secondary in comparison to the immediately natural. It is in the power of man to overcome even adverse bodily conditions (κράσις σώματος) by virtue of free will, or else to choose what is rotten and evil. Consequently, whether we are worthy or unworthy, good or bad, depends on us, on our ἕξεις, and our free decisions. Free volitional decision is subject to judgment due to virtuous or vicious action, because virtues, as well as vices, stem from us.[402]

In Maximus the Confessor the concept of "ἕξις" plays a decisive role not only in the unfolding of the doctrine of the will but it is systematically connected both to his anthropology and his dynamic concept of being. The word

401 Maximus, ThPol, 10, in: PG 91, 136D–137A.

402 Nemesius, De natura hominis, 39–41, in: PG 40, 761A–780B.

"ἕξις" has three main meanings corresponding to the content of the philosophical concept. It means "possession" and is opposed to both "κτῆσις" (acquiring) and "στέρησις" (privation). Hence, it follows the possibility of translating it as "peculiarity" or "property." The word also means "permanent state" and consequently opposes "σχέσις" (relation). "'Εξις" further signifies "capacity for perception," which is achieved based on experience. Although these meanings find a place in the content of the concept in Maximus, its understanding should be interpreted primarily as "a stable internal-hypostatic state." In any case, in his view, the concept is antithetical to "θέσις" (placement, appointment, ordinance), belonging to the class of concepts for nature. In accordance with the logos of its being, all beings are encompassed in one order (τάξις) determining their placement (θέσις) and their relation (σχέσις) to the others.

The concept of "ἕξις" has an important place in Aristotle and is interpreted as an accidental form characterizing being through permanent properties. He distinguishes it (though not very sharply) from the term "διάθεσις" (unstable, transitional state). Regarding humans, Aristotle distinguishes two types of attributes as "stable inner states": some are present from birth, and some are assumed in the course of life.[403] The same is analogically valid for every singular being. For Aristotle (as for Maximus), ἕξις does not signify anything against nature, nor something natural, but suitability for actualizing some existing attitude. In this sense, ἕξις has a mediating position and is characterized by a certain potentiality. Aristotle determines ἕξεις as forces developed on the basis of the activities of faculties that provide active causes unfolded as actions, thus remaining "potential."[404]

In agreement with Aristotle, who defines ἕξις as a specific mode of action by the possessing and the possessed, emphasizing its role as an intermediary between the acting and the result of the action,[405] John Damascene describes it as a certain type of the action (ἐνέργεια) of the concrete, emphasizing its stability, or as a capacity for perception, indicated as the first meaning of δύναμις, thus placing ἕξις between δύναμις and ἐνέργεια.[406]

For Maximus, the concept is inextricably linked to ἐνέργεια and is constantly applied in the context of his unfolded triad "εἶναι—εὖ εἶναι—ἀεὶ εἶναι" (being—good being—eternal being). He conceives ἕξις as a "constitutive characteristic"

403 Categories, VIII, 8b26–9a13.

404 G. Funke, Hexis (habitus), in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Bd. 3, Bâle–Stuttgart 1974, 1122.

405 Metaphysica, 5, 1022b4–10.

406 Dialectica, 58, in: ed. Kotter 1, 126, 1–127, 12 (PG 94, 645BC).

or "constitutive peculiarity" (συστατικὴ ἰδιότης).[407] Its substantive basis is relatively easy to describe, initially at the level of the problem of will.

In elucidating the transition to the personalization of the volitional, i.e., the transition from θέλεσις (will) as a natural force to βούλησις or ποιὰ θέλεσις, i.e. to the way of using the will or the "qualified will," which is already personally formed, Maximus draws attention to the fact that γνώμη relates to προαίρεσις, to concrete volitional decision, in the same way that ἕξις relates to ἐνέργεια. Both γνώμη and ἕξις are determined as "ὄρεξις ἐνδιάθετος" (internal longing or predisposition).[408] They are defining factors of self-determination, whereby ἕξις is directly associated with preliminary readiness (προχείρησις) for enactment in the course of the temporal process.[409] Drawing on an expression from Cyril of Alexandria, Maximus connects γνώμη with way of life (τρόπος ζωής), emphasizing that it (like the ἕξις) is not related to the *logos* of nature but to the τρόπος χρήσεως, the way of using natural powers within the framework of the respective way of life.[410]

Analagous to γνώμη, the crucial connection of ἕξις with power and energy should be explained. Just as γνώμη, which is interpreted as the instance between the will, which is a natural power, and volitional decision, the personally directed action of the will, so ἕξεις are regarded by Maximus as intermediaries between powers and energies.[411] They are the mediator (μεσότης) between intention and realization, between the internal and external aspects of human life, whereby, constantly existing at the level of potentiality, they assign the respective hypostatic determination to the natural energies. They impart the unique and very concrete determination of being in the modes of its dynamics. The ἕξεις should be understood as subject-carrying mediators. In anthropology they are conceived as the fundamental demonstration of human freedom.

As both powers and energies are indeed natural, they are hypostatically concretized, determined and directed by the "filter" of the ἕξεις. Thus, the unequal intensity of natural energies emitted by different hypostases or even by the same hypostasis in different periods of its own history finds an explanation.[412] Energy is one and the same in all hypostases of a single nature. But there are

407 Maximus, Pyrrh., in: PG 91, 352A.

408 Maximus, ThPol, 1, in: PG 91, 17C.

409 Maximus, Pyrrh., in: PG 91, 313B, 324D–325A.

410 Maximus, Pyrrh., in: PG 91, 308B–D.

411 Maximus, Pyrrh., in: PG 91, 352A.

412 Cf. G. Kapriev, I. Tchalakov, Actor-Network Theory and Byzantine Interpretation of Aristotle's Theory of Action: Three Points of Possible Dialogue, in: *Yearbook of the Institute for Advanced Studies on Science, Technology and Society*, Volume 57, eds. A. Bamme, G. Getzinger, B. Wieser, München–Wien 2009, 223–224.

different ways the energy is expressed, which are recognized by the πράξις of the respective hypostasis.[413] The concept of ἕξις embeds the problem of being in the perspective of the hypostatic.[414]

The ἕξεις are the hypostatic factor for the direction and determinateness of actions. They are the internal filter of natural actualization. It is important to emphasize that the ἕξεις do not simply "process" natural energies. They define the natural energies (the energies in the proper sense) concretely and direct the causal energies (the "movements"). Maximus the Confessor regards the ἕξεις as pillars of self-determination, where ἕξις is directly associated with what is realized in the temporal process.[415]

The last two topics in this chapter insistently raise questions about the relationship between the principles of essence and the modes of existence from the perspective of the nature-hypostasis relationship.

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413 В.М. Лурье, *История византийской философии. Формативний период*, Москва 2006 [B.M. Lourié, *The History of Byzantine Philosophy: The Formative Period*, St. Petersburg 2006—Russian], 378–379.

414 Cf. Г. Каприев, *Максим Изповедник. Въведение в мисловната му система*, София 2010 [G. Kapriev, *Maximus the Confessor: An Introduction to His System of Thought*, Sofia 2010—Bulgarian], 191–197.

415 Maximus, Pyrrh., in: PG 91, 324D–325A.

CHAPTER 2

The Principles / *logoi* of Being

Socrates and even more intensively Plato and Aristotle focus philosophical attention on the λόγοι: the λόγοι as words, propositions, arguments, and definitions, but also as causes, proportions, forms, and principles.[1] The Byzantine conceptualization of the subject has parallels with the concepts of Plotinus and Proclus, Origen and Evagrius,[2] but it carries a distinctly specific character. The role of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite is difficult to overestimate on this point.

1 Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite

All who have dealt with the subject seriously, from Maximus the Confessor[3] and John Damascene[4] to George Florovsky[5] and Basil Lourié,[6] highlight one key passage in *De divinis nominibus*. Dionysius tries to illustrate that God, the cause of all, contains the paradigms of all being by virtue of a superessential oneness (τὰ πάντων τῶν ὄντων παραδείγματα κατὰ μίαν ὑπερούσιον ἕνωσιν) through a simile with the sun, which unites in itself in advance all the causes of its

1 Cf. e.g. R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of Nature*, Oxford 1968, 66–68.

2 D. Bradshaw, The Logoi of Beings in Greek Patristic Thought, in: *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation*, ed. B. Foltz, J. Chryssavgis, New York 2013, 9–13; M. Constas, *Maximus the Confessor, Dionysius the Areopagite, and the Transformation of Christian Neoplatonism, in: Analogia*, 1 (2017), 7, n. 27.

3 Maximus Confessor, Ambigua ad Ioannem (AmbIo), 7, in: PG 91, 1085A. Engl. transl. N. Constas in: Maximos the Confessor, The Ambigua, Cmabridge, Mass.–London 2014.

4 Johannes Damascenus, De imaginibus III, 21, in: *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, Bd. 3, ed. B. Kotter, Berlin–New York 1975 (ed. Kotter 3), 128, 1–12 (PG 94, 1340A).

5 G. Florovsky, The Catholicity of the Church, in: *Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, v. I, Vaduz 1987, 37–55, in: http://www.holytrinitymission.org/books/english/theology_church_florovsky_e.htm.

6 В.М. Лурье, Логика иконопочитателей в период второго иконоборчества, в: *Логика и онтология в византийской догматической полемике. Очерки*, сост. Д.С. Бирюков, В.М. Лурье, Санкт-Петербург ²2020 [B.M. Lourié, The Logic of the Iconophiles during the Second Iconoclasm, in: *Logic and Ontology in Byzantine Dogmatic Polemics: Essays*, eds. D. Biriukov, B.M. Lourié, St. Petersburg ²2020—Russian], 284; B. Lourié, Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite: Modal Ontology, in: *Logic in Orthodox Christian Thinking*, ed. A. Schumann, Berlin–New York 2012, 239.

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actions (μονοειδῶς προείληφε). The first cause generates (παράγει) essences by virtue of an exit from the essence (κατὰ τὴν ἀπὸ οὐσίας ἔκβασιν). We call παραδείγματα, explains Dionysius, those λόγοι which, pre-existent in God as unity, create the essences of beings. Theology calls these λόγοι "predefinitions" and "divine and beneficent acts of will" which are predefining and creative for all beings, according to which God, who is superessential (ὁ ὑπερούσιος), foresaw and brought forth all beings.[7]

At this point, at least four important perspectives should be noted. First, with the teaching on the λόγοι, Dionysius avoids emanationism—the λόγοι are acts of divine will, not emanations of the Divine essence.[8] The "weak" Neoplatonism of Dionysius displaces the idea of emanation in a doctrine of participation, pointing out that the world is not merely a poor copy of emanative energy. It is a web that has nothing in common with its origin.[9] Secondly, Dionysius emphasizes that, in the case of the λόγοι or παραδείγματα, it strictly concerns divine creativity, the causing of beings. The λόγοι are related to creative divine energy and not to the essential activity of God. Thirdly, it must be taken into account that it is about "models" and "exemplars," not about the real beingness of what's created. Fourthly, it should be noted that Dionysius does not equate the λόγοι τῶν ὄντων (the principles of beings) with the principle of the respective contingent essence (λόγος τῆς οὐσίας), although essence-creating λόγοι have a primary importance for him. "To be" is thus equivalent to "to participate in God via His λόγοι", Basil Lourié notes. Moreover, he continues, different λόγοι are responsible for different modes of being, which ensures the movement of creatures from their creation to their deification.[10] The significance of this feature can hardly be overstated.

Ernesto Sergio Mainoldi notes that, through the theory of the λόγοι, Dionysius seeks to solve the problem of the ontological status of individuals according to their species. Dionysus avoids the risk of conceiving of the λόγοι as Platonic intermediating principles. The distance between God and creatures is

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7 Παραδείγματα δέ φαμεν εἶναι τοὺς ἐν θεῷ τῶν ὄντων οὐσιοποιοὺς καὶ ἐνιαίως προϋφεστῶτας λόγους, οὓς ἡ θεολογία προορισμοὺς καλεῖ καὶ θεῖα καὶ ἀγαθὰ θελήματα, τῶν ὄντων ἀφοριστικὰ καὶ ποιητικά, καθ' οὓς ὁ ὑπερούσιος τὰ ὄντα πάντα καὶ προώρισε καὶ παρήγαγεν—DN, 5, 8, ed. Suchla, 188, 4–10 (PG 3, 824C).

8 Cf. D. Bradshaw, Divine Freedom: The Greek Fathers and the Modern Debate, in: *Philosophical Theology and the Christian Tradition: Russian and Western Perspectives*, ed. D. Bradshaw, Washington 2012, 83–84.

9 U. Eco, At the Roots of the Modern Concept of Symbol, in: *Social Research*, 2 (1985), 386–387.

10 B. Lourié, Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite: Modal Ontology, in: *Logic in Orthodox Christian Thinking*, ed. A. Schumann, Berlin–New York 2012, 239.

filled by the non-mediated providential actions of the divine essence. They are presented as pre-ontological distinctions in the creative will of God. He is the eternity of being, the creative source and measure of being, the beginning, middle, and end of all things. He precedes essence, being, and eternity. To Him is properly attributed past, present, and future, came-to-be, coming-to-be, will-come-to-be.[11]

In a further step, Mainoldi explains: The theory of the λόγοι allows Dionysius to define the ontological status of individuals excluding any causal role for universals in the generation of beings.[12] Indeed, the term γένος never recurs in Dionysius's writings, but he does use the term εἶδος, as Mainoldi shows.[13] This point should be approached carefully. Not only is a λόγος of essence posited for each of the beings, but it is also emphasized by Dionysius. They are divine λόγοι for universals, genera and species. In this sense they are present in the created. They not only lack independent existence but are in things alongside all other λόγοι, including those for particular and unique characteristics.[14] In the teaching of the λόγοι, any exceptional causal role for universals is excluded due to the diversity of the λόγοι that form individual beings. There are no uniform paradigms for single beings. They are established through networks of λόγοι. Therefore, Mainoldi adds: "Dionysius excludes the possibility of speaking of 'exemplars in relation to something' (πρός τι παραδείγματα)."[15]

In the following lines of this chapter, Mainoldi continues, Dionysius denies again the existence of a plurality of entities acting as causes, and underlines that God, in His simplicity, is the unique cause of everything: He holds in advance all things in Himself (πάντα μὲν ἐν ἑαυτῇ προέχει). In His total simplicity He shakes off all duplication and embraces everything in His transcendent infinity (περιέχει κατὰ τὴν ὑπερηπλωμένην αὐτῆς ἀπειρίαν). He is shared (μετέχεται) indivisibly through participation by all.[16]

The term ἀρχαὶ τῶν ὄντων introduced by Dionysius in the fifth chapter of the *De divinis nominibus* is also commented on in this context. The conclusion is

11 E.S. Mainoldi, The place of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* in the development of the Byzantine canon of ontology, in: *The Dionysian Traditions* (Rencontres de Philosophie Médiévale 23), ed. G. Kapriev, Turnhout 2021, 63–64.

12 Ibid., 65.

13 Ibid., 66.

14 Cf. T.T. Tollefsen, *The Christian Metaphysics of St. Maximus the Confessor: Creation, World-Order, and Redemption*, Turnhout 2023, 174–196.

15 E.S. Mainoldi, The place of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* in the development of the Byzantine canon of ontology, in: *The Dionysian Traditions* (Rencontres de Philosophie Médiévale 23), ed. G. Kapriev, Turnhout 2021, 66, with reference to DN 5, 9, ed. Suchla, 188, 11 (PG 3, 824D).

16 Ibid. with reference to DN 5, 9, ed. Suchla, 189, 2–6 (PG 3, 825A).

that these "origins" are equivalent to the λόγοι τῶν ὄντων.[17] Alexander Golitzin arrives at a similar conclusion, noting that the terms λόγοι, παραδείγματα, ἀρχαὶ, and αἰτίαι are congruent as designations of the divine origins of creation, and thus of divine acts of will. Alongside this, he draws attention to the concepts of λόγος and ἀναλογία, through which Dionysius describes the intersection of polarity and intimacy between the Creator and creation. This relationship and this tension generate the moving force of the dynamism of Dionysian system, Golitzin explains.[18]

The dynamics of the hierarchical principle, writes Gergana Dineva, stems from the conception that it concerns a sacred order of being, which is, however, also knowledge and activity. Therefore, each degree and each member of one level should always be considered with respect to its active presence. The preservation of the individuality of each member is ensured in a twofold dynamic relation. On the one hand, it happens through the constant relationship of each individual member to all the others. On the other, this preservation is guaranteed through the connection of each individual member with God. It is realized in activity (ἐνέργεια) hypostatically, and not generally, not in the essence (οὐσία).[19]

The formative effect of the λόγοι is realized directly in the second and indirectly in the first type of connection. The Dionysian hierarchy is not a gradation of essences. They are two essences in all—angels and humans. They are not subject to change or alteration. The unified hierarchy is based on the original dignity of the statuses corresponding to individual natures and to individual members. In this way, the relatively autonomous internal hierarchies or orders of being are established, within which each member dwells in its particularity. This puts emphasis on each single existence's own characteristics and possibilities. The function of the individual is strongly emphasized. It is determined in its uniqueness by the λόγοι, which uphold its dignified status. Emphasizing intrinsic value requires personal hierarchical activity in the process of purification, enlightenment, and perfection, which is the path to the deification of the entire hierarchy. The fixed stability of the sacred order in no way cancels internal-hierarchical movements and the possibility of personal transitions

17 Ibid., 67.

18 A. Golitzin, *Et Introbo ad Altare Dei, The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita, with Special Reference to Its Predecessors in the Eastern Christian Tradition*, Thessalonike 1994, 84; A. Golitzin, *Mystagogy: A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita*, Collegeville, Minnesota 2013, 113–119.

19 G. Dineva, The Dionysian Symbolic Universe, in: *The Dionysian Traditions* (Rencontres de Philosophie Médiévale 23), ed. G. Kapriev, Turnhout 2021, 326–327.

between pre-ordained levels. Rather, it is precisely in this that the dynamism of the hierarchy consists, uniting and confirming itself as a unified order. The union with God is realized in all its possible fullness at each hierarchical level. It is not, however, uniform but has a strictly personal character. The encounter of the divine light with the beings penetrated by it is the meeting of the freedom of the created with providence freed from all conditions. In this active relationship, each receives a share corresponding to their—good or evil—deeds. Only individual, ana-logously summoned hypostases are able to change their status to a higher one.[20]

The Christian doctrine of the λόγοι, established by Dionysius and noticeably influenced by Proclus, finds its exemplary conceptual form in the work of Maximus the Confessor, who was not only influenced by Dionysius. His doctrine has an original contributory character.[21] There are resonances, but also dissonances with Dionysius's position. Maximus enters into a creative debate with it, without undermining its principle. Instead of Dionysian verticality, Maximus elaborates a non-spatial model, representing an immediate and dynamic continuum in which the Logos, the λόγοι, and contingent beings interact.[22] Thus, at the same time, he preserves the core contents of the Dionysian conception. Crucially, David Bradshaw notes, Maximus directly quotes and adopts the Dionysian description of the λόγοι as "divine acts of will," a description that indicates that each λόγος is specifically and individually determined.[23] After Maximus's work, the doctrine of the λόγοι of being becomes a commonly used tool within the framework of Byzantine philosophy.

It should be mentioned here that each of the philosophers uses the doctrine of λόγοι in his own way. Some do not actually apply it. An exemplary case is John Damascene. Certainly, he is not entirely unfamiliar with this doctrine. At one point, he says that nature is the common logos of being (κοινὸς τοῦ εἶναι λόγος) of those with one and the same essence, as is the case with "man in gen-

20 Г. Каприев, Учението за йерархията на Псевдо-Дионисий Ареопагит и западноевропейската средновековна култура, във: *Философски преглед*, 4 (1991) [G. Kapriev, The Doctrine of Hierarchy of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Western Medieval Culture, in: *Philosophical Review*, 4 (1991)—Bulgarian], 31–50.

21 Cf. Г. Каприев, *Максим Изповедник. Въведение в мисловната му система*, София 2010 [G. Kapriev, *Maximus the Confessor: An Introduction to His System of Thought*, Sofia 2010—Bulgarian], 144–151.

22 M. Constas, *Maximus the Confessor, Dionysius the Areopagite, and the Transformation of Christian Neoplatonism, in: Analogia*, 1 (2017), 8 and 11–12.

23 D. Bradshaw, The Logoi of Beings in Greek Patristic Thought, in: *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation*, ed. B. Foltz, J. Chryssavgis, Fordham 2013, 17. With reference to *AmbIo*, 7, in: PG 91, 1085A.

eral."[24] Elsewhere, he asserts that Peter and Paul are spoken of as individual men because each of them includes within themselves the common *logos* (κοινὸς λόγος) of man as such.[25] Regarding creation, Damascene states that God knows the images and paradigms of all beings before their creation, while they acquire their being in the time determined to them according to God's non-temporal volitional thought (κατὰ τὴν θελητικὴν αὐτοῦ ἄχρονον ἔννοιαν) arising from His timeless providence.[26] Nevertheless, one may generally admit that the λόγοι-doctrine does not have a systematic place in Damascene's thought. In fact, striking elements of Maximus's vision are missing in his work. In principle he recognizes the λόγοι of creation as immutable principles underlying the created order. But he considers them more as bearers of natures and therefore not as comprehensive determinants of the individual, as a result of which they cannot be understood as manifestations of the divinization of the entire cosmos.[27] Damascene's approach is not an isolated case. However, a majority of philosophers follow—in various ways—Maximus the Confessor.

2 Maximus the Confessor

Through the doctrine of the λόγοι of created beings, Maximus explains the activity of the divine will and creative energies face to face with the multiplicity of the created world. It should not be overlooked that the initial question in presenting the doctrine is how and in what sense man has been and is a part (μοῖρα) of God.[28]

The λόγοι, determining every being, are its principle, laying down its beginning of being and the goal toward which it strives in its existence.[29] The λόγοι determine the individual as a unified whole, which simultaneously differs from other beings.[30] They set the internal constitution of each being. The λόγοι of beings are not some necessary outflows of the divine essence. They depend on God's plan of creation and exist as acts of the creative divine will. The λόγοι are

24 Johannes Damascenus, De haeresibus, in: PG 94, 745B.

25 Iohannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 44, in: *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, Bd. 1, ed. B. Kotter, Berlin–New York 1969, 109, 2–110, 22 (PG 94, 616A–617A); De haeresibus, in: PG 94, 749AB.

26 Johannes Damascenus, Expositio fidei, 1, 9, in: *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, Bd. 2, ed. B. Kotter, Berlin–New York 1973, 32, 16–20 (PG 94, 837A).

27 Cf. A. Louth, *St John Damascene*, Oxford 2002, 117–118.

28 Cf. AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1077B.

29 Quaestiones ad Thalassium (Thal.), 64, in: PG 90, 709B.

30 AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1077C.

neither Aristotelian forms corresponding with the matter concerned, nor the Platonic ideas (not only because they are not paradigmatic essences embedded in some cosmic "hypostasis" of their own, guaranteeing the immutable-general, but also because they determine uniqueness and are generators of change[31]). According to Maximus, the λόγοι are a "cosmic incarnation" of the Logos, one parallel to (and anticipatory of) His historical incarnation in Christ. This gives rise to T.T. Tollefsen describing the metaphysical system of Maximus the Confessor as "Christocentric cosmology": The whole economy (world order) of creation and redemption has in a special way its center in Christ the Logos—it is a series of His incarnations.[32] The λόγοι are the principles governing divine action within history,[33] considered by Maximus as "intentions" of God, which are uncreated, eternal, pre-existing in God.[34] The λόγοι are the divine volitional words by which creation occurs in general and through which providentially the created is preserved, unfolded, and existentially realized—the whole of creation and each individual created being.

Maximus insists that the λόγοι completely "encompass" the whole being: every created being is encompassed both in essence and in arising from its own λόγοι and the λόγοι of surrounding external things.[35] They are λόγοι of everything that has existed, exists, or will exist. The concrete being corresponds to the λόγος that determines its essence or nature; to the λόγος situating it in a certain species, and to the one that situates it in a genus, as well as to the multitude of λόγοι fixing the various properties that shape its complete definiteness[36] They are λόγοι of quantity and quality, of relation, local situatedness, time, position, movement, stability, and so on.[37] There are both particular and universal λόγοι.[38] The λόγοι structure not only the what-being of each thing but also its how-being (πῶς εἶναι).[39] Therefore, there is no single λόγος corresponding to an

31 Cf. J.-C. Larchet, La conception maximienne des énergies et des *logoi* et la théorie platonicienne des idées, in: *Philotheos*, 4 (2004), 280–283.

32 T.T. Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor. A Study of his Metaphysical Principles*, Oslo 1999; T.T. Tollefsen, *The Christian Metaphysics of St. Maximus the Confessor: Creation, World-Order, and Redemption*, Turnhout 2023, 128–129.

33 D. Bradshaw, Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers, in: *The Thomist* 70 (2006), 349–350.

34 Cf. S. Mitralexis, *Ever-Moving Repose. The Notion of Time in Maximus the Confessor's Philosophy through the Perspective of a Relational Ontology. Dissertation*, Berlin 2014, 114–121.

35 AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1081B.

36 Maximus Confessor, Epistulae (Ep.), 12, in: PG 91, 485D.

37 Cf. AmbIo, 15; 17, in: PG 91, 1217AB; 1228A–1229A.

38 AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1080A; AmbIo, 21, in: PG 91, 1245B.

39 Cf. В.В. Петров, *Максим Исповедник: онтология и метод в византийской философии VII века*, Москва 2007 [V.V. Petrov, *Maximus the Confessor: Ontology and Method in 7th Century Byzantine Philosophy*, Moscow 2007—Russian], 140.

individual, but multiple λόγοι synthesizing in their coherence the "own *logos*" of the specific being. In symmetry with this, these *logoi* perform a particularizing function, thanks to whose mode of operation each being is different from and independent of all others.[40] Every part of the cosmos mirrors every other because all parts belong to one whole, but each "mirror" reflects what is essential to it in a strictly unique sense.[41]

Determined in their entirety by God, the λόγοι are immutable and permanent in the God Logos, before creation and before all eons. In them God recognizes specific things.[42] They are uncreated but different from the uncreated divine being.[43] The λόγοι are intentions and volitional acts of God through which all creatures acquire their essential determinants, as well as their generic, specific, and individual shaping properties. In any case they are not the universals themselves, but rather principles of immanent universal regulations. Christ is not the highest universal, but the one who contains within Himself all λόγοι: the one Logos is many λόγοι according to their "procession" (πρόοδος) and the many λόγοι are one Logos according to the course of "return" (ἀναφορά).[44] The various λόγοι possess themselves as a unity within the Logos, viewed not as an abstract metaphysical principle but precisely as the Word of God and the Father, through which everything is created. He is the beginning, the cause and the foundation of everything: everything that exists is in the Word of God.[45]

However, this immanence should not be understood literally. The λόγοι are not the hypostasis of the divine Logos itself. As super-being, the God Logos stands above any participation in Him.[46] He is transcendent both for the λόγοι

40 Cf. J.-C. Larchet, La conception maximienne des énergies et des *logoi* et la théorie platonocienne des Idées, in: *Philotheos*, 4 (2004), 281–282.

41 T.T. Tollefsen, A Metaphysics of Holomerism, in: *Maximus the Confessor as a European Philosopher*, eds. S. Mitralexis, G. Steiris, M. Podbielski, S. Lala, Eugene, Oregon 2017, 30.

42 Thal., 2, in: PG 90, 272A; Thal., 60, in: PG 90, 625A; AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1081A; AmbIo, 42, in: PG 91, 1328AB, 1329BC. Cf. J.-C. Larchet, *La divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris 1996, 113–114.

43 N. Loudovikos, Ontology Celebrated: Remarks of an Orthodox on Radical Orthodoxy, in: *Encounter Between Eastern Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy. Transfiguring the World Through the Word*, eds. A. Pabst, C. Schneider, Ashgate 2008, 147.

44 AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1081BC. Cf. D. Bradshaw, Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers, in: *The Thomist* 70 (2006), 348; M. Constas, *Maximus the Confessor, Dionysius the Areopagite, and the Transformation of Christian Neoplatonism, in: Analogia*, 1 (2017), 9.

45 AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1077C–1080B. Cf. T. Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor*, Oxford 2008, 75–76 and 170–171.

46 AmbTh, 3, in: PG 91, 1081D); AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1081B). Cf. I.P. Sheldon-Williams, St. Maximus the Confessor, in: *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A.H. Armstrong, Cambridge 1967, 497–498.

and for every contingent reality. They are not God. They are in the view of God and therein consists their participation in God. Thanks to this kind of participation they are interpreted as "part" of God.[47] The λόγοι are representations of finite beings in the view of God, through which they can be deified. Created beings are a "part" of God in this and only in this sense.

The λόγοι of God are constantly acting and actual because God is their creator according to His energy (καθ' ἐνέργειαν). They are present within God's wisdom and will, which are determined as powers and even as the power (δύναμις) of God. Since God's creative, or causal, energies are not the natural energies of His essence, but rather energies of His will, every being can be created in time, transitioning from potentiality to actuality (from δυνάμει to ἐνεργείᾳ), without causing any essential change in God. He does not begin to be Creator only after the creation of contingent creation. In *Ambiguum 7* and in *Capita de caritate*, T.T. Tollefsen notes,[48] Maximus distinguishes between God's knowing all things in His λόγοι before (πρίν) they came to be, and God's making of each being in accordance with the λόγοι at the appropriate time (τῷ ἐπιτηδείῳ καιρῷ).[49] God associates with time not by His essence, but through His energies. The λόγοι are divine thoughts and desires, they are thought-wills that exist thanks to a divine good act of will (βουλήσει ἀγαθῇ).[50] With explicit reference to Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, Maximus names them both λόγοι and θελήματα.[51] At one point, focusing on their "implementation" in creation, he directly calls them "divine energies."[52]

It should be noted, however, that by calling the λόγοι "divine energies" or "divine acts of will," he does not directly identify them with either the essential

47 Cf. J.-C. Larchet, La conception maximienne des énergies et des *logoi* et la théorie platonicienne des idées, in: *Philotheos*, 4 (2004), 280.

48 AmbIo, 7, PG 91, 1081A; Capita de caritate, 4, 4, in: PG 90, 1048D.

49 T.T. Tollefsen, *The Christian Metaphysics of St. Maximus the Confessor: Creation, World-Order, and Redemption*, Turnhout 2023, 108.

50 From this perspective, which presupposes the comprehension of both the divine intellect and the divine will as the power of God, the distinction between divine principles of knowledge and divine principles of making (T.T. Tollefsen, *The Christian Metaphysics of St. Maximus the Confessor: Creation, World-Order, and Redemption*, Turnhout 2023, 109 and 132–133) can have only an epistemological character.

51 AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1080A, 1085AB; Thal., 13, in: PG 90, 296A. Cf. V. Lossky, *Essay sur la théologie mystique de l'Église d'Orient*, Paris 1944, 90–95; L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator. The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, Lund 1965, 78–79; J.-C. Larchet, *La divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris 1996, 114–115.

52 AmbIo, 22, in: PG 91, 1257AB. Cf. A. Riou, *Le Monde et l'Église selon Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris 1973, 60.

or creative energies of God.[53] Rather, in this way he shows that divine creative energies can be seen and recognized both in the created and in the λόγοι themselves.[54] The λόγοι exist in God even before creation, while the creative energies are identical with the act of creation itself. The former are divine "volitional thoughts" and the latter is their historical realization.[55] God has created and continues to create all things at the appropriate time. For their part, the λόγοι are to be understood as the unified and pre-ontological cause of all ontological distinctions. They precede the creation of all essences and powers inhabiting the cosmos.[56] The divine energies are not the λόγοι themselves. They are present in the λόγοι.[57]

The λόγοι ensure the preservation of being, the constitution of its parts and dimensions, as well as its development. They do not form a structure of substances functioning as an ontological mediator between God and creation. By definition, such a mediator does not exist. The individual λόγοι are not meant substantively, but dynamically. Each λόγος necessarily fulfills the function of an encompassing and connecting cause (ἀιτία συνεκτική), which envelops the respective being and relates it to the whole. It contains natural action and elicits that action, which constitutes its causal activity.[58] Simultaneously, God's creative energies are carriers of the λόγοι, embedding them in the specific being. The λόγος, in turn, differentiates these energies, through which the individual being receives its energies in a specific way. Divine energies act in accordance with all the λόγοι, and this is the way in which God works, dwells and becomes known with all His energy in each individual thing. This happens in every essence, as well as in every natural or natural-like property, relation, existential destiny, etc., and together with this, in the totality of all created things.[59]

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53 *"Logoi* and activities are different metaphysical moments"—T.T. Tollefsen, *The Christian Metaphysics of St. Maximus the Confessor: Creation, World-Order, and Redemption*, Turnhout 2023, 145.

54 Cf. D. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West. Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom*, Cambridge 2004, 206.

55 M. Đorđević, *Nikolas Kabasilas. Ein Weg zu einer Synthese der Tradition*, Leuven–Paris–Bristol 2015, 77.

56 E.S. Mainoldi, The place of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* in the development of the Byzantine canon of ontology, in: *The Dionysian Traditions* (Rencontres de Philosophie Médiévale 23), ed. G. Kapriev, Turnhout 2021, 70. With reference to AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1080A.

57 J.-C. Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines. Des origines à saint Jean Damascène*, Paris 2010, 395.

58 Cf. В.В. Петров, *Максим Исповедник: онтология и метод в византийской философии VII века*, Москва 2007 [V.V. Petrov, *Maximus the Confessor: Ontology and Method in 7th Century Byzantine Philosophy*, Moscow 2007—Russian], 75.

59 AmbIo, 22, in: PG 91, 1256D–1257C.

The λόγοι coexist in permanent joint action with the entirety of divine energies, through which both the individual and the whole are simultaneously seen and known by God.[60]

The doctrine of the λόγοι categorically expresses the understanding of being as a dynamic network. The λόγος is in itself pure dynamics, actively carried and transmitting effect, i.e. energy. This dynamic stands in constant correspondence with the entire energy system. The λόγοι are the ontological truth of beings. One of man's tasks, therefore, is to advance toward contemplation of the divine Logos through cognitive contemplation of the λόγοι.[61]

3 Metaphysics of the Concrete

From the perspective of the doctrine of the λόγοι, as developed by Maximus the Confessor, God is not to be conceived as "the being of all beings," as "das Wesen aller Wesen,", as "*summum ens*," through which an onto-theological metaphysical doctrine might be established.[62] This circumstance is significant with regard to the identification of all metaphysics with onto-theology. One such identification, particularly emphasized by Martin Heidegger,[63] posits that metaphysics is onto-theo-logy; metaphysics has an onto-theological structure; the fundamental characteristic of metaphysics is called onto-theo-logic.[64] In this context, Heidegger speaks of a "forgetfulness of difference as such," primarily referring to the difference between being and beings (die Differenz zwischen Sein und Seiendem).[65]

Prominent thinkers such as Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida, Gianni Vattimo, to mention just a few emblematic names, firmly continue Heidegger's line of thought. According to them, metaphysics par excellence is a mode of think-

60 Cf. P.G. Renczes, *Agir de Dieu et liberté de l'homme*, Paris 2003, 139–142.

61 Cf. AmbTh, 3, in: PG 91, 1081D; AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1081B. Cf. С.Л. Епифанович, *Преподобный Максим Исповедник и византийское богословие*, Москва ²1996 [S.L. Epifanovič, *St. Maximus the Confessor and Byzantine Theology, Moscow* ²1996—Russian], 64–68; I.P. Sheldon-Williams, St. Maximus the Confessor, in: *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A.H. Armstrong, Cambridge 1967, 497–498.

62 Cf. I. Kant, *Critik der reinen Vernunft*, Riga 1781/1787, A 578/9 / B 606/7 and A 631–632 / B 659–660.

63 Cf. M. Heidegger, Die onto-theo-logische Verfassung der Metaphysik, in: M. Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, 1 Abteilung, Bd. 11: Identität und Differenz, Frankfurt am Main 2006, 53–79.

64 Ibid., 63–64 und 67.

65 Ibid., 76–78.

ing that identifies being with objectivity and the ultimate foundation. Being is conceived as an external "givenness," pre-established as an objective form.[66] It is taken for granted that the metaphysics of the whole of Western civilization is onto-theology.

Medieval philosophy is a favorite exemplary case. An onto-theological version of metaphysics was indeed massively represented in those philosophical traditions, but it did not have a monopoly on metaphysical thinking. The Middle Ages were familiar with alternative variants. One such variant in the Latin West, for example, is historical metaphysics, represented by figures like Rupert of Deutz, Honorius Augustodunensis, Gerhoch of Reichersberg, Otto of Freising, Anselm of Havelberg, and their like-minded contemporaries. This kind of metaphysics does not intend to act abstract-universalizingly. It is implemented from the perspective of the historical unfolding of the universal and has as its metaphysical basis the particular.[67] Further examples of teachings opposed as alternatives to onto-theological metaphysics are the philosophical platforms of Anselm of Canterbury with his doctrine of truth and with the *aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit* from *Proslogion*,[68] of Robert Grosseteste with the *ipsa formositas omnis formosi*,[69] as well as of Nicholas of Cusa with his entire philosophical program. Their metaphysics does not proceed from some *a priori* presupposed causal foundation (Urwesen, *ens originarium*) of being, a foundation thought of as an objective, supreme, divine *res*, but from the sense of being. It is guided by the question of the existence and origin of this sense. For them, it is not a question of deriving a first cause, viewed as the key to causality and/or substantiality, sought as a representational "super-sense," some kind of "sense of the senses" accordingly.

In deriving the meaning of the "impossible" (das Unmögliche) and the "unconditioned" (das Unbedingte), Jean-Luc Marion[70] interprets the understanding of Anselm of Canterbury and establishes that God reveals Himself to the question about God when he transcends the limits of thought, that is, of metaphysical *a priori*, which pretends to know Him *as such*.[71] Reduced to

66 Cf. e.g. G. Vattimo, *Dopo la cristianità. Per un cristianesimo non religioso*, Milano 2002, 71ff.

67 Cf. G. Kapriev, *Lateinische Rivalen in Konstantinopel* (*Anselm von Havelberg und Hugo Eterianus*), Leuven 2018, 89–95.

68 Cf. G. Kapriev, *… ipsa vita et veritas*, Leiden–New York–Köln 1998, 103–143 and 171–309.

69 De unica forma formarum (De forma prima omnium), in: *Die philosophischen Werke des Robert Grosseteste, Bischofs von Lincoln*, Münster 1912, 106–111 (here 108–109).

70 Cf. J.-L. Marion, Die Frage nach dem Unbedingten, in: *Welt der Gründe* (Deutsches Jahrbuch Philosophie, Bd. 4), eds. J. Nida-Rümelin, E. Özmen, Hamburg 2012, 1095–1119.

71 Ibid., 1108.

"objecthood" ("Gegenständlichkeit"), God becomes *ex hypothesi* and by definition non-God. The question of God must be referred beyond the finite space of our experience and the *a priori* given conditions.[72] In an isomorphic key, in his digging into the original form of metaphysics, Andreas Speer interprets the views of Aristotle and introduces the convergence as an epistemic structural moment. Regarding the respective epistemic field, Speer writes, Aristotle's genesis of knowledge presupposes the admission of a limiting value, giving the cognitive operation its purposiveness within its predetermined boundaries. The view is directed toward the conditions for understanding *par excellence*. This principle acts as a fundamental rule of convergence for every human activity of reason in a constitutive and determinative respect. In the maximal extent of the epistemic fields, the boundary manifests itself as the most general norm, the structure of the most general principles of knowledge, without coinciding with these fields or with any epistemically achieved content. The convergence limit remains unattainable for the epistemic process. However, it converges the dynamics of knowledge, putting into action the conditions for the possibility of understanding.[73]

Convergence is a principle adapted to explain the peculiarity of this type of metaphysical thinking. As a limit-principle, the producer and guarantor of the senses of being is not to be interpreted as a "singular object," that is, as a hypostasized supreme sense, and it is not the *prototypon* of all senses, considered as its imperfect copies-*ectypa*.[74] It is not to be conceived as counting towards the set of senses, as the continuum of sense-sets and/or the content totality of meaningfulness. It is the convergent point of the sense-sets, which by definition cannot coincide with their being and epistemic structures. Furthermore, it is not recognizable by any content appropriation of the sense-sets.

The dialectic of the non-other unfolded by Nicholas of Cusa demonstrates this kind of metaphysics in an exemplary way. Nicholas makes clear that this limiting principle is "prior" to every concept and sense, as well as prior to every negation and affirmation. The non-other that determines everything else is rationally unknowable, whereas everything that is known by reason is known through the non-other. It is the "ineffable," which is not different from any object, but it is still not an object and does not coincide with any object. It is

72 Ibid., 1109.

73 Cf. A. Speer, *Fragile Konvergenz. 3 Essais zu Fragen metaphysischen Denkens*, Köln 2010, 13–20.

74 Cf. Kant on the ideal of pure reason in: I. Kant, *Critik der reinen Vernunft*, Riga 1781/1787, A 567–583/B 599–611.

not the other, nor is it some other of the other, nor is it some other in the other. It is the *principium seu ratio* of everything. Everything else participates in it in order to be determined.[75]

In his analysis of the treatise *De non aliud* Alexei Losev emphasizes that Nicholas's real intention is to answer the question of what makes the thing a thing, not in general, and not just any thing, but precisely this and such a thing. There is a search for an absolute individuality of the thing, conceived as a common principle: a uniform logical structure, indifferent to the infinite diversity of individual things. The very non-other that gives sense to everything is not simply the essence of everything, it is not its "*quidditas*". It is not the answer to the question "what is this thing?" It is the principle of essences (*ratio essentiarum*). A main function of the non-other as a principle is its sense-giving power, which stands above every contradiction and opposition. It is the condition that gives sense to unity. It gives sense, the becoming of sense, without itself being sense. The non-other does not make the thing meaningful, but it gives the sense itself, the "what" of the thing, through which the thing has sense. It posits the self-identity of the concrete being. The "non-other-ness" of every being is its moment of absolute self-identity. It is the irreducible form of absolute individuality. The non-other contains everything else, indeed, not objectively, but according to sense. In it lies the becoming of all sense-potencies and being-realities. The not-other is *virtus actu infinita*. Beings participate in it, each to a different degree of intensity. Nicholas of Cusa calls it *conceptus absolutus*, which can be seen (*videtur*) with the mind, but not apprehended (*non concipitur*). It cannot be other to anything else, which excludes its being as an object. The non-other cannot be an object and cannot become an object.[76] Nicholas of Cusa's metaphysics is a metaphysics of the concrete.

Losev explicitly places "the teaching of the Byzantine Palamites in the 14th century"[77] within the group of doctrines analogous to the philosophy of Cusanus. But in this respect they follow precisely the main points of Maximus the Confessor's doctrine concerning the λόγοι τῶν πραγμάτων. The various λόγοι exist as a unity not in some supreme universal or transcendental, but in the view of the Word of God, without being contained in it. He remains transcendent both to the λόγοι and to any contingent reality. The synthetic "λόγος" of

75 Cf. Nikolaus von Kues, *De non aliud / Nichts anderes*, ed. K. Reinhardt, Münster 2011.

76 А. Лосев, О трактате Николая Кузанского ‚О неином', в: *А. Ф. Лосев. Николай Кузанский в переводах и комментариях*, т. 1, сост. Е. Тахо-Годи, Москва 2016 [A.F. Losev, On Nicholas of Cusa's Treatise 'On the Not-Other', in: *A.F. Losev, Nicholas of Cusa in Translations and Commentaries*, Vol. 1, ed. E. Takho-Godi, Moscow 2016—Russian], 401–422.

77 Ibid., 422.

each thing is its principle, which sets the beginning and the goal of its being. The inner constitution of the individual being is determined by a multitude of λόγοι, universal as well as particular, shaping its complete specificity. Therefore, the theory of the λόγοι as a metaphysics of the concrete, makes, among other things, the question of universals and accordingly of realism and nominalism a side issue among Byzantine thinkers who accept it in its full scope. The individual λόγοι, which are not some kind of intermediary being between God and creation, are not thought of as objects, but dynamically, as dynamics. Each of them, being a boundary principle, is pure dynamics, in constant correspondence with the entire energy structure.[78] The acceptance of this doctrine explains the fact that an onto-theological metaphysical position is rare among Byzantine philosophers. Most of them represent a different kind of metaphysics.

4 The Analogous Independence of Being

As already noted, the λόγοι are not identical with the essences and characteristics of the finite being. It has an autonomous constitution of being. The really existing essential being is technically called πρᾶγμα αὐθύπαρκτον. A relative or analogous autonomy of this being is affirmed, that is, independence according to its own measure.

Through the doctrine of the λόγοι and their presence in the world, an explanation of being in its movement is achieved:[79] it is "a metaphysical description of the dynamics of being."[80] The λόγοι are perpetually founded in God. However, the created beings begin to exist at the appropriate moment (ἕκαστα τῷ ἐπιτηδείῳ καιρῷ) in the appropriate manner, according to the decision of God's wisdom and will. The perpetual presence of the λόγοι is not to be understood as a pre-creation of things.[81] The λόγοι of things do not allow them to be thought of as some "potential essences." In creation, the work of the creative energy of

78 Cf. Г. Каприев, *Максим Изповедник. Въведение в мисловната му система*, София 2010 [G. Kapriev, *Maximus the Confessor: An Introduction to His System of Thought*, Sofia 2010—Bulgarian], 144–151; Г. Каприев, Една алтернатива на онтотеологията: от средновековието до днес, в: *Архив за средновековна философия и култура*, 23 (2017), 193–209.

79 В.М. Лурье, *История византийской философии*, С. Петербург, 2006 [B.M. Lourié, *The History of Byzantine Philosophy: The Formative Period*, St. Petersburg 2006—Russian], 368.

80 T.T. Tollefsen, A Metaphysics of Holomerism, in: *Maximus the Confessor as a European Philosopher*, eds. S. Mitralexis, G. Steiris, M. Podbielski, S. Lala, Eugene, Oregon 2017, 31.

81 Maximus Confessor, AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1081A.

the entire Trinity,[82] the created are an effect of divine energies, not the energies themselves. Creations receive a being, characterized by their own essence, power and energy.

Integrated in the network constructed by its λόγοι, the individual created thing, being created from nothing, deviates more or less from its "logosness," which sets its existential "autonomy." Dependent on God, the created also have their relative sovereignty. Therefore, it is said that they exist and are autonomous or self-existent (καθ' ἑαυτά), without implying that they cease to be God's creations or become independent of God.

Although beings are entirely and perfectly contained within their λόγοι, the being, created according to essence and genesis (κατ' οὐσίαν τε καί γένεσιν), precisely because of this, is necessarily subject to development or destruction. The stable and obligatory characteristics of the finite are precisely differentiation, inequality, and diversity. Finite things are measurable and inevitably included in a network of relations. Therefore, they are subject to a description by the Aristotelian categories, which cannot apply to God. After its emergence, the being is actual (ἐνεργείᾳ), but it exists thanks to the energy of its own contingent essence. The λόγοι are not identical with the divine essence, but nor are they identical with the individuals in the created world, with anything in them, including their essences.[83] Maximus nowhere states that created beings participate in the λόγοι as such. Rather, the λόγοι should be understood as "prescriptions" for development or movement from an ontological state of potentiality to a state of actualization.[84] The λόγοι do not pre-program the mode of presence and activity of beings.[85]

This autonomy of beings should be understood as an ana-logical one. Creation is the actualization of natural potencies, but it is an incomplete one. The actuality of the created world is relative, not absolute. The process will be completed after the ἐπιστροφή to God.[86] Alexander Golitzin draws attention to the use of the concept ἀναλογία by Dionysius. Unlike the Hellenic Neoplatonic

82 Maximus Confessor, Thal., 28, in: PG 90, 364A.

83 Cf. AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1081AB. H. U. v. Balthasar, *Kosmische Liturgie. Das Weltbild Maximus des Bekenners*, Einsiedeln ²1961, 112–113; P. Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua of St. Maximus the Confessor and his Refutation of Origenism*, Roma 1955, 178 and 191; A. Riou, *Le Monde et l'Église selon Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris 1973, 54–59.

84 T.T. Tollefsen, *The Christian Metaphysics of St. Maximus the Confessor: Creation, World-Order, and Redemption*, Turnhout 2023, 170 and 234.

85 D. Bradshaw, St. Maximus on Time, Eternity, and Divine Knowledge, in: https://www.academia.edu/17836492/, 5.

86 В.М. Лурье, *История византийской философии*, С. Петербург, 2006 [B.M. Lourié, *The History of Byzantine Philosophy: The Formative Period*, St. Petersburg 2006—Russian], 370.

philosophers, for him, it means "according to their measure." Dionysius refers to the capacity or potential of each thing, which must—in being and effect—be realized to achieve full conversion-ἐπιστροφή to God. It is about a mobilization of the essence, the power and the energy of the being. The autonomy of the finite being in its God-willed realization is an analogical or synergical one, corresponding to the measure of the individual thing.[87] The source of the acts of the finite being is "beyond" it. However, this does not hinder its acts from being a manifestation of its own character. This kind of participation in the activity or energy of another is called "synergy."[88]

With direct reference to Dionysius, Maximus the Confessor explains that the Word of God reveals Himself to everyone and everything according to the measure corresponding to the individual analogously (κατὰ τὴν ἑκάστου ἀναλογίαν). Everything created is analogically (ἀναλόγως) participating in God (μετέχει Θεοῦ) because of its origin from God. Considering the different levels of being, this existential participation occurs according to the intellect (νοῦς), or reason (λόγος), or sensation (αἴσθησις), or vital movement (κίνησις ζωτική), or essential and generative capacity (οὐσιώδης καὶ ἐκτικὴ ἐπιτηδειότητα).[89] The λόγοι do not coincide with the species of beings but correspond to them[90] and to the entire composition of the being.

Thorstein Tollefsen demonstrates that, according to Maximus, two foundational metaphysical structures ensuring the unity of being exist. The one that is causative is strictly divine, while the other, which is the result of this, is a certain internal cosmic arrangement in the created being. The former are the creative and structural principles or λόγοι, the latter is the arrangement of the whole and the part formed on the basis of these λόγοι.[91] The God Logos "becomes thick," says Maximus in *Ambiguum* 33,[92] in the sense that he "concealed" (ἐγκρύψας) Himself in the λόγοι of the beings, Tollefsen notes. They are intellectually comprehensible insofar as the visible creation "contains" (ἔχει) spiritual λόγοι that nourish the intellect.[93]

87 A. Golitzin, *Et Introbo ad Altare Dei, The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita, with Special Reference to Its Predecessors in the Eastern Christian Tradition*, Thessalonike 1994, 86–88.

88 D. Bradshaw, Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers, in: *The Thomist* 70 (2006), 353.

89 Maximus Confessor, AmbIo, 7, in: PG, 91, 1080AB.

90 D. Biriukov, Hierarchies of beings in the Patristic thought: Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, and the palamites, in: *Scrinium*, 10 (2014), 284.

91 T.T. Tollefsen, A Metaphysics of Holomerism, in: *Maximus the Confessor as a European Philosopher*, eds. S. Mitralexis, G. Steiris, M. Podbielski, S. Lala, Eugene, Oregon 2017, 25.

92 AmbIo, 33, in: PG 91, 1285D.

93 T.T. Tollefsen, *The Christian Metaphysics of St. Maximus the Confessor: Creation, World-Order, and Redemption*, Turnhout 2023, 28 and 43.

The self-determination and autonomy of the created being do not limit divine fullness in any way. It means that alongside God arises another, heterogeneous essence or nature, which differs from Him and is, in a certain sense, an independent and autonomous subject. Something that did not exist before now emerges and comes forth. Through creation something absolutely new is brought into existence, an extra-divine reality.[94] In the process of shaping being, which imparts uniformity, difference, motion, etc., specific divine intention can be discerned, determining through the λόγοι how each being is unique, connected to other beings through a complex network of relations.[95] For this reason, getting to know the *logos* of the being as being (ὁ λόγος τῶν ὄντων ᾗ ὄντα), as it is usually formulated in the first philosophy, begins with the exploration of the existing world, the economy.

5 *Logos*/Principle of Essence and *Tropos*/Mode of Existence

By virtue of mental inertia, the λόγοι of things are reduced to the λόγοι of essence. This is as incorrect as it is symptomatic because the λόγος or principle of essence, which is only one among many λόγοι, is a member of another essential conceptual pair, in which the counterpart is the mode of existence.

The conceptual dyad "principle of essence (or of being—λόγος τῆς οὐσίας or λόγος τοῦ εἶναι)—mode of existence (τρόπος τῆς ὑπάρξεως or τοῦ πῶς εἶναι τρόπος)" emerges as part of the argumentation practice of Byzantine thinkers as early as the 4th century. It was introduced by Amphilochius of Iconium and was elaborated by Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Theodoret of Cyrrhus. In the case of these thinkers, it was exclusively used in a Trinitarian context.

Amphilochius' aim is to show that the accusations of some form of tritheism leveled at the Cappadocians are unfounded. For him, τρόπος ὑπάρξεως is the respective divine person with relational semantics, Alexandar Djakovac notes. Although the concept does not receive a stable, complete and unambiguous definition among the Cappadocians, it shows that by "mode of existence" what is meant is not what something is (τὸ τί ἐστίν) but how it is (τὸ ὅπως ἐστίν). It characterizes, above all, the hypostatic characteristics of the Trinity—unbegotten, begotten, proceeding. The difference between the divine hypostases arises not from a difference in their natures but from the respective

94 G. Florovsky, Creation and Creaturehood, in: *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky, Vol. III: Creation and Redemption*, Belmont, Massachusetts 1976, 46.

95 D. Bradshaw, The Divine Processions and the Divine Energies, in: *The Dionysian Traditions* (Rencontres de Philosophie Médiévale 23), ed. G. Kapriev, Turnhout 2021, 90.

different mode of existence of the one nature. The concept of τρόπος ὑπάρξεως denotes not the essence but the mode of existence of this essence. In the divine Trinity, these modes are represented by and in the hypostases. Alongside this, Djakovac cites the remark of Gregory of Nyssa that there is a great distance separating the characteristics of created beings and the characteristics of the Creator.[96] This position undergoes far-reaching development.

In the 5th–8th centuries, the concept pair was adopted by monastic circles. In the 6th century, Leontius of Byzantium introduces it into the context of Christological debates.[97] While in trinitarian theology it serves to distinguish the distinctive properties of divine hypostases, in Christology, distinctions in the states of natures are fixed: by it are marked respectively the "what is" (τὸ τί ἐστίν) and the "how"-being (τὸ ὅπως ἐστίν). Shortly thereafter, the distinction gains validity for every essence and every hypostasis.

The distinction between "*logos*/principle" and "*tropos*/mode" constitutes the axis of Maximus the Confessor's thinking about God,[98] as well as his thinking on every being and existence. It runs through Triadology and Christology, through the whole of the economy and anthropology, through pneumatology and soteriology.[99] The universalization of this difference is one of Maximus' exclusive merits.

According to Maximus, the λόγος of essence (or being[100]) is the constitutive determinant of essence. It is immutable, unchangeable and corresponds to the law of nature. The immutable λόγος of essence is part of the divine law (νόμος) for any nature that exists and arises in accordance with this λόγος.[101] By necessity the law of nature preserves the indispensable λόγος of nature.[102] The λόγος-law is the carrier of its definition or normative constitution. Any hypothetical alteration or renewal of the λόγος would lead to the destruction of that

96 A. Djakovac, Τρόπος ὑπάρξεως bei den Kappadokischen Vätern und bei St. Maximus Confessor, in: *Durch den Glauben denken. Aufsätze aus der serbischen Theologie heute*, hg. B. Šijaković, Belgrad 2017, 119–127.

97 Cf. P. Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua of St. Maximus the Confessor and his Refutation of Origenism*, Roma 1955, 155–166; C. V. Schönborn, *Sophrone de Jérusalem. Vie monastique et confession dogmatique*, Paris 1972, 193–194; J.-C. Larchet, *La divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris 1996, 141–151.

98 J.M. Garrigues, Le Dessein d'adoption du Créateur dans son rapport au Fils d'après S. Maxime le Confesseur, in: *Maximus Confessor, Actes du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur, Fribourg 2–5 septembre 1980*, eds. F. Heinzer, C. Schönborn, Fribourg 1982, 185.

99 Cf. M.-J. Le Guillou, Préface, in: A. Riou, *Le Monde et l'Église selon Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris 1973, 9–10.

100 Cf. e.g. AmbTh, 5, in: PG 91, 1052B; Mystagogia (Myst.), 23, in: PG 91, 701A.

101 AmbIo, 31, in: PG 91, 1280A.

102 AmbIo, 31, in: PG 91, 1280A.

specific kind of nature. This λόγος-law carries natural necessity within it: it lays down all the properties and characteristics of the individual that are constitutive of it and without which it would not be itself. In the case of a rational nature, such necessary characteristics are mind, rationality/intellect, and free will, which implements freedom.

The mode of existence (ὁ τρόπος τῆς ὑπάρξεως or τοῦ πῶς εἶναι τρόπος) is the order of natural action. It is the bearer of variation, modification or innovation (even in quite wide amplitudes) within the context of the immutability of the λόγος.[103] The mode of existence of any created nature not only does not exclude, but even presupposes the emergence of new, previously historically unestablished forms of its existence. It should be noted that Maximus uses the term "novelty," "innovation," "renewal" (καινοτομία) concerning the modes of existence of nature neutrally and in a technical sense. One "novelty" or "innovation" is the mode of existence of human nature after the ancestral sin, another is the mode of existence of human nature in the hypostatic union of Christ, which allows the potential of human nature to be realized on its way to full actualization in a soteriological and eschatological perspective.

While the *logos* establishes being, the *tropos* establishes the specific presence of that being.[104] The transition from "*logos*" to "*tropos*" is the transfer of the essential order to the existential order.[105] Λόγος is associated with creation, and τρόπος with the οἰκονομία, Andrew Louth points out: λόγος corresponds to God's plan for the created order, τρόπος—to divine economy.[106] Every self-existing thing does not simply have (ἁπλῶς) being, but also a how-being (τὸ πῶς εἶναι), which is the first kind of limitation (εἶδος περιγραφῆς) on the being of the essence predefined in the *logos*.[107] This *tropos* is the form of the various expressions of nature. It is the way in which the essence exists and acts.

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103 AmbIo, 42, in: PG 91, 1341D.

104 AmbIo, 5, in: PG 91, 1052B.

105 Cf. J.M. Garrigues, *Maxime le Confesseur. La charité, avenir divin de l'homme*, Paris 1976, 100–112; J.-C. Larchet, *La divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris 1996, 141–144; P. Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua of St. Maximus the Confessor and his Refutation of Origenism*, Roma 1955, 165–169; A. Riou, *Le Monde et l'Église selon Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris 1973, 80–87; В.В. Петров, *Максим Исповедник: онтология и метод в византийской философии VII века*, Москва 2007 [V.V. Petrov, *Maximus the Confessor: Ontology and Method in 7th Century Byzantine Philosophy*, Moscow 2007—Russian], 24–27.

106 A. Louth, St. Maximos' Distinction between "logos" and "tropos" and the Ontology of the Person, in: *Maximus the Confessor as a European Philosopher*, eds. S. Mitralexis, G. Steiris, M. Podbielski, S. Lala, Eugene, Oregon 2017, 162.

107 AmbIo, 10, in: PG 91, 1180B.

Possessing its own *logos* of essence and *tropos* of existence is a necessary condition for the existence of every particular being—it is impossible without them.[108]

One key point here is the differing response to the question of whether the field of applicability of the term "tropos of existence" is nature/essence or hypostasis. Is the difference between τί ἐστίν and ὅπως ἐστίν identical to the difference between nature and hypostasis? And is it acceptable to construct an opposition between the following two conceptual chains: first, on the one hand, "essence/nature-necessity-law," which should characterize the logos of nature and, second, on the other hand, the series "hypostasis/person-relation-freedom-love-grace" which should be characteristic of the τρόπος τῆς ὑπάρξεως and directly associated with the hypostasis?[109]

Since the focus is on the human hypostasis, applying the two concepts to Trinitarian dogma cannot be a criterion because the case of the Holy Trinity is too special to be applied within the anthropological domain. As early as the second half of the 4th century the Cappadocian fathers had made quite explicit clarifications regarding the formulation of Divine difference in terms of hypostasis and of Divine unity in terms of essence or nature, emphasizing the simplicity of the nature of the Divine being and the absence of discontinuity and intervals within it. Maximus the Confessor speaks of Divinity as an exception to the general mode of action of the dyad "*logos-tropos*." Since the Divine nature is not divided, distributed or simply represented in the Divine persons but exists entirely in each of them, the Divine hypostases coincide with the modes of existence of the Divine essence.[110] For the same reason, God's essence coincides with the *logos*/principle of Divine being and with its own *logos*, as there is no *logos* that is externally given or different from Divine being which regulates the being or essence of God. In the case of the Divinity, the distinction "*logos-tropos*" helps the clear articulation of the fact that the three hypostases of the Trinity are not something different from the Divine nature, and the mode of Divine existence in the three hypostases does not in any way violate the simplicity and actuality of nature. The existence of the hypostases with their properties and relations is the very existence of God. This does not weaken or relativize the proper being of nature and its principle. This is the line also followed in the reflections of John Damascene: The three Divine hypostases are

108 Cf. AmbIo, 42, in: PG 91, 1341D; V. Karayiannis, *Maxime le Confesseur: essence et énergies de Dieu*, Paris 1993, 206.

109 Cf. e.g. J.D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion. Studies in Personhood and the Church*, New York 1997, 40–65.

110 Cf. Maximus Confessor, AmbIo, 67, in: PG 91, 1400D–1401A.

not just similar; they have identical essence. The unity of Divinity is not composed of the hypostases; it is in three hypostases and is three hypostases, each possessing the perfect fullness of Divine essence and existence. The hypostases differ between each other only in terms of their unique hypostatic properties. The hypostatic properties in the case of the Divinity coincide with their existence and express the mode of existence (τρόπος τῆς ὑπάρξεως) of the nature that is proper for each of the hypostases.[111]

"Mode of existence" is not a concept equivalent to "hypostasis" or "mode of hypostatic existence." The concept of "existence" does not refer solely to the hypostasis. The hypostatic mode is not equivalent to that of existence (ὕπαρξις, ὑπαρχειν). In the standard usage of the dyad "*logos-tropos*," Maximus directly attributes the mode of existence to the order of essence.[112] Τρόπος τῆς ὑπάρξεως is the way in which nature actually exists. It denotes nature in its concrete reality. However, every *tropos* of existence of nature is realized in hypostases, as far as there is no un-hypostatic essence or nature. It should be added that different hypostases represent different modes of existence of nature in one and the same period of time.[113] The hypostasis "recapitulates" the *tropos* of existence.[114]

Precisely in order to prevent the identification of "*tropos* of existence" with "hypostasis" and by strictly differentiating between essence and hypostasis, with regard to hypostatic being Maximus speaks about the "logos of the hypostasis" and the "mode of existence of the hypostasis," juxtaposing and contrasting them with the *tropos* and *logos* of essence.[115] Here λόγος τῆς ὑποστάσεως denotes the inner constitution of the particular hypostasis: the enhypostazation of its nature, the implementation of the hypostasis in the corresponding *tropos* of existence of nature, the framework of its proper conditions of being, the structure of its unique properties.

Photius of Constantinople employs these concepts and applies them to Trinitarian theology. He leaves no room for doubt about the significance of the logos of nature, which ensures the consubstantiality of the hypostases. At the same time, by pointing to the Divine monarchy, he emphasizes that the

111 Johannes Damascenus, Expositio fidei, I, 8, in: *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, Bd. 2, ed. B. Kotter, Berlin–New York 1973, 27, 19–31, 297 (PG 94, 824A–833A).

112 Cf. AmbIo, 42, in: PG 91, 1329A; 1341D; 1344D.

113 В.М. Лурье, *История византийской философии*, С. Петербург, 2006 [B.M. Lourié, *The History of Byzantine Philosophy: The Formative Period*, St. Petersburg 2006—Russian], 352–353.

114 C. Yannaras, The Distinction between Essence and Energies and its Importance for Theology, in: *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 19 (1975), 235.

115 Cf. AmbIo, 36, in: PG 91, 1289C; *Ep.*, 12, in: PG 91, 493D.

Father is the cause of the being of the Son and the Holy Spirit according to the λόγος of His hypostasis, in which λόγος there is no place for any other hypostasis. The procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father is not a mere coming into existence but causal in respect of essence and nature. The Father, however, is the cause of the other two hypostases, not according to the λόγος of nature but according to the λόγος of hypostasis (λόγος τῆς ὑποστάσεως) and, more specifically, according to the λόγος of His own hypostasis (λόγος τῆς πατρικῆς ὑποστάσεως).[116]

In anthropology, the τρόπος τῆς ὑποστάσεως refers to the manner in which a person utilizes its natural abilities or properties and directs and employs its own will[117]—that which distinguishes it from other human hypostases in their otherwise common mode of natural existence. The *tropos* of the hypostasis may vary in the historical time of the particular person, without disrupting its general hypostatic constitution. This is the unique and specific "how" of organizing natural and all other activities carried out by that hypostasis.

In this context, Maximus instructively points out: "Everyone acts (ἐνεργεῖ) fundamentally as something, in other words as a person. As someone, for example Paul or Peter, he forms (a specific) mode of action (τὸν τῆς ἐνεργείας τρόπον), for example by reduction or amplification, forming himself through the specific mode of action according to his internal volitional attitude (κατὰ γνώμην). It follows that the differences in persons with respect to the mode of action is recognized by their activities (πρᾶξις), while the identity of the natural action follows from the logos of nature."[118] Natural energy is one and the same in all individuals. Its unity and uniqueness actualizes the presence of the nature within every individual. It is the bearer of the species form. However, this form is actualized hypostatically; it is strengthened, weakened, concentrated, or dispersed through the complex of attitudes and characteristics uniquely inherent to each person.[119]

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116 Cf. Photius, Mystagogia, 15–16, in: PG 102, 293AB.

117 Maximus Confessor, Pyrrh., in *PG* 91, 294A.

118 Maximus Confessor, ThPol, 10, in: PG 91, 137A.

119 Cf. G. Kapriev, I. Tchalakov, Actor-Network Theory and Byzantine Interpretation of Aristotle's Theory of Action: Three Points of Possible Dialogue, in: *Yearbook of the Institute for Advanced Studies on Science, Technology and Society*, Volume 57, eds. A. Bamme, G. Getzinger, B. Wieser, München–Wien 2009, 212–224; Г. Каприев, Логос на същността, начин на съществуване, хексис и лично действие, в: *Логос и тропос*, съст. Р. Солунчев, С. Кочовска-Стевовиќ, М, Ѓорѓевиќ, М. Чичева-Алексиќ, Скопје 2020 [G. Kapriev, Logos of Essence, Mode of Existence, Hexis, and Personal Action, in: *Логос and тропос*, eds. R. Solunchev, S. Kočovska-Stevoviќ, M. Đorđević, M. Čičeva-Alexić, Skopje 2020—Bulgarian], 7–12.

The distinction between the two λόγοι (natural and hypostatic) and their corresponding mode of existence, however, does not imply any contra-positioning. On the contrary, the natural finds its unique articulation through the hypostatic.

Maximus emphatically stresses the uniqueness of the human hypostasis. The unique features and characteristics of the individual diversify the naturally given within wide limits. It should be noted that, for him, the processes of change in a person are not connected with time in the general, abstract, and anonymous sense of the word (χρόνος), but with right, appropriate, qualitatively determined moments (καιροί); they are also connected with needs or desires. Human existence is defined personally. Divine providence regarding the individual takes into account human uniqueness and multidimensionality, harmonizing (ἁρμόζεσται) with everything or every mental disposition (πρᾶγμα καὶ νόημα), and even with the smallest movements of the soul and body. In humans, divine providence acts in constant interaction with personal and autonomous human agency.[120] Having focused on humanity and it alone, these are the grounds for Maximus to speak about other types of existence and being.

6 Being—Good/Evil-Being—Eternal-Being

Maximus distinguishes between two classes of modes of existence for human nature, which have a specific correspondence with one another. On the one hand, he speaks of modes of existence of human nature in history: before the fall, after it, after the Incarnation of the Word, and after the Judgment. On the other hand, he outlines three universal modes of existence of human nature: being—good-being/evil-being—eternal-good-being/eternal-evil-being.

He introduces the triad of λόγοι of being through the anthropological dichotomy of "image-likeness," where the first member (κατ' εἰκόνα) is a constant quantity, and the second (καθ' ὁμοίωσιν) is variable, open, and constructed in the dialogue between grace and freedom. Therefore, "likeness" is related to γνώμη, to personally qualified will, that is, to the personal mode of existentially using nature.[121] The former is by creation and expresses essence, the other is by birth and expresses the form of a specific way of life. One is by nature, the other by hypostasis.[122]

120 Cf. AmbIo, 10, in: PG 91, 1192D–1193A.

121 Maximus Confessor, AmbIo, 42, in: PG 91, 1345D.

122 Cf. F. Heinzer, *Gottes Sohn als Mensch*, Freiburg, Schweiz 1980, 165 and 168.

The three universal modes or *logoi* pre-exist in God. God is the origin of every being; He is the beginning of good-being and is Himself the goal of eternal-being. He is also the initiator of movement from one being to another.[123] Nature does not resist grace because nature is charismatic according to its origin and stands in a relationship of mutual complementarity with grace.[124] The Lord united us with the *tropos* of redemption, insists Maximus, and gave us the power to be eternally sons of God: now our salvation is in our own power.[125] The distinction "image-likeness" reveals the synergy between God and humans, without abolishing the priority of Divine grace.

In its fullness the *logos* of the genesis of rational beings contains being, well-being and eternal-well-being. Movement towards being is inherent to man by his nature. Only the movement towards good-being depends on his free choice. Union with God is not at the beginning but at the end of the movement, at its goal. Man is in God by the logos of his being; he moves in God and—supported by the divine grace—acts virtuously by the logos of well-being; he lives in God by the *logos* of eternal-well-being.[126]

Being is given according to the essence of the things that are. The *logos* of being is given for movement by nature, namely for natural forces and the corresponding energies in their non-qualified state. According to this *logos*, all beings are included in an order (τάξις) which determines their ontological status (θέσις) and their relation (σχέσις) to other beings.[127] However, the λόγος of well-being becomes proper only for those who initiate a movement of their own accord. Good-being (εὖ εἶναι) depends on human volitional disposition (γνώμη) and on the corresponding "self-moved" choice. It is in accordance with the personal orientation towards the Good and is a constant movement towards God. In this context, Maximus insists that if the λόγος of being imparts δύναμις (power), the other λόγος imparts energy. This λόγος is related to how-being (πῶς εἶναι) and personal way of life. It is thus in permanent correspondence with the natural *tropos* of existence at the same time. Well-being expresses not the image of God, but the likeness to God.[128] The *logos* of well-

123 AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1048B, 1073AC; AmbIo, 10, in: PG 91, 1116B.

124 Cf. P. Evdokimov, De la nature et de la grace dans la théologie de l'Orient, in: *1054–1954. L'Église et les Églises* (offerts à L. Beaduin), t. II, Chevetogne 1955, 177–178 and 184; L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator. The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, Lund 1965, 461.

125 Maximus Confessor, Liber asceticus, in: PG 90, 953B.

126 Cf. AmbIo, 7; 65, in: PG 91, 1073C, 1076A, 1077AB, 1084B; 1392AC.

127 Cf. AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1073BC; AmbIo, 10, in: PG 91, 1176C; AmbIo, 15, in: PG 91, 1217A; AmbIo, 65, in: PG 91, 1392AB.

128 AmbIo, 10; 65, in: PG 91, 1116B, 1168B; 1392AC; Thal., 2, in: PG 90, 272AB.

being asserts the personal order of freedom and its irreducibility. This order realizes the transition from being to eternal-being and mediates initial and final causality. Man moves freely towards God or against the logos of his own nature. Depending on the mode of freely using natural powers and energies, man dwells in well-being or in evil-being (φεῦ εἶναι).[129] This is the point at which it becomes completely transparent that the condition for divine energy to be infused into man is human energy. Through it, the degree of participation of the human hypostasis in the Trinitarian *perichoresis* is marked.[130]

Maximus emphasizes that, in accordance with a permanent inner disposition (καθ' ἕξιν παγίαν), man participates in virtue and thus in well-being, and lives in God according to the λόγος of eternal-being.[131] Eternal-being (ἀεὶ εἶναι) is not given to rational beings by nature. Neither does it necessarily follow from a volitional decision, but is given by divine grace.[132] It is actualized on the "seventh day," when human powers and energies cease and achieve rest.[133] The Giver of being also gives eternal-well-being through grace.[134] Through this the human being in its entirety receives—through grace and because of the action of the virtues—four decisive divine properties or characteristics (ἰδιώματα, γνωρίσματα): being, eternal-being, goodness, and wisdom. God possesses them by essence, but man has them by participation. The first two are related to the essence of man and the others to his gnomic ability. Through them, man fully confirms his being created in the image and likeness of God, and becomes by grace what God is by essence.[135] Eternal-well-being (ἀεὶ εὖ εἶναι) is viewed as identical to deification.

Regarding the choice of evil-being, introduced through the unnatural use of the principle of being, Maximus repeatedly speaks of eternal-evil-being (ἀεὶ φεῦ εἶναι), which justly follows this choice. Those included in the principle of

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129 Cf. AmbIo, 41, in: PG 91, 1308C; AmbIo, 42, in: PG 91, 1329AB. J. M. Garrigues, *Maxime le Confesseur. La charité, avenir divin de l'homme*, Paris 1976, 96; J.-C. Larchet, *La divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris 1996, 167–168; N. Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology. Maximus the Confessor's Eschatological Ontology of Being as Dialogical Reciprocity*, Brookline, Mass. 2010, 76–88; D. Bradshaw, St. Maximus on Time, Eternity, and Divine Knowledge, in: https://www.academia.edu/17836492/, 5.

130 S. Markov, *Die metaphysische Synthese des Johannes von Damaskus. Historische Zusammenhänge und Strukturtransformationen*, Leiden–Boston 2015, 343.

131 AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1081B–1084B.

132 AmbIo, 65, in: PG 91, 1392AB.

133 Opuscula theologica et economica (ThEc) 1, 55, in: PG 90, 1104B; AmbIo, 65, in: PG 91, 1392A.

134 Thal., 60, in: PG 90, 624D.

135 AmbIo, 10, in: PG 91, 1137D–1141C; Capita de caritate (Car.) 3, 25, in: PG 90, 1024BC. F. Heinzer, *Gottes Sohn als Mensch*, Freiburg, Schweiz 1980, 164; P. Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua of St. Maximus the Confessor and his Refutation of Origenism*, Roma 1955, 149.

eternal-evil-being will no longer be able to contain within themselves good-being, as they are hostile to it, and they will have no movement whatsoever, nor power for movement.[136] The sinner brings non-being into existence and resembles it entirely. Through him, non-being receives a hypostasis and begins to act destructively due to its deficiency of being. In this way, modes of existence of nature enter the cosmic being, carrying a new form of existence. This insertion of evil into existence is the choice of evil-being.

Eternal-evil-being, Hell, consists precisely in the eternal being-decay of the sinner. His nature and everything good in him will be saved thanks to the salvific work of Christ. Defined as evil, which comes from sinful man and non-being, the remainder is separated from what belongs to God. Therefore Maximus speaks of such a dreadful condemnation lasting "infinite eons" as a "relative alienation" or "alienation in relation" (σχετικὴ ἀλλοτρίωσις) from God.[137] This inner-hypostatic rupture in eternity is Hell itself, eternal suffering and pain, destruction, eternal-evil-being.[138] The sinner remains in a relation to God, but he will never be united fully with Him.

Through the teaching of these three modes of being, Maximus rejects the antagonism between man's moral action and his constitution of being. Both existence in good-being and the process of deification are realized obligatorily according to human *hexis* and through grace (κατὰ τὴν ἕξιν διὰ τῆς χάριτος).[139] Within the horizon of well-being, this teaching explains the way the holy Spirit and the individual human being interact in the realm of the personal.

7 The Co-creator

The status of the human being with his modes of existence within the multidimensional network structured by the *logoi* is a special one. The character of this network presupposes that all beings dwell in a mutual synergetic connection. In recognizing a Pauline "synergistic ontology" as a motif of Byzantine philosophy, however, it is man that is primarily referred to: God imparts his energy to do his will, though it must be freely expressed or "worked out" to be effective.[140]

136 Cf. AmbIo, 7; 42; 65, in: PG 91, 1073C; 1329AB; 1392AD; ThEc 1, 54–56, in: PG 90, 1104BC. J.-C. Larchet, *La divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris 1996, 170–171.

137 AmbIo, 21, in: PG 91, 1252B.

138 AmbIo, 20; 21, in: PG 91, 1237BC; 1252B.

139 Thal, 6, in: PG 90, 281AB.

140 D. Bradshaw, The Concept of the Divine Energies, in: *Philosophy and Theology*, 18/1 (2006), 104–105.

In man, his free choice is, in fact, what leads him towards a state of full being, which is the Creator's intent, or towards non-being. Human activity is of such a kind that it exerts a decisive influence on the whole creation. The dialogical and analogical aspect of the *logoi* in the relations between God and human beings proves man as co-creator of God: His co-creator.[141]

Apostle Paul instructively explains: "We are co-workers of God; you are God's field, God's building."[142] Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite places this position at the foundation of the analogical relation between man, God, and creation. Based on Scripture, he asserts that each of those summoned within the hierarchy finds its own perfection through being led to its own level (ἀναλογίαν) of imitation of God, and to what is more divine than anything else, the expression of divine energy within himself as much as is possible and becoming a co-worker of God (Θεοῦ συνεργός).[143]

Alexander Golitzin comments on this passage and draws attention to the point that, with regard to human beings, the *logoi* are personal vocations to which we may or may not choose to conform, or better—since they remain transcendent by virtue of their source in God—to which we may choose to be ever in the process of becoming conformed in order thus to share, as it were, in the eternal process of our own creation.[144] Already within the horizon of the realization of the *logoi*, the human being is called on to be co-creator of God.

Nikolaus Loudovikos highlights the view, typical of the Greek-speaking Fathers' tradition and particularly of the thought of Maximus the Confessor, that the uncreated *logoi* are acts of the divine loving will in constant dialogue with creation. Logos—formulates Loudovikos—always means dia-*logos*, dialogue. God creates, that is, He offers to beings their own essence and opens up the space for an ontological dialogue. If essence is given, its mode of existence is the result of the dialogue between the Logos-Word of God and the logos-word of man. This means that the final *esse* of created beings is unknown, indeterminate, because it is the eschatological result of a long dialogue between God and man.[145]

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141 S. Tanev, Man as Co-creator: Reflections on the Theological Insights of St Maximus the Confessor within a Contemporary Interdisciplinary Context, in: *Maximus the Confessor as a European Philosopher*, eds. S. Mitralexis, G. Steiris, M. Podbielski, S. Lala, Eugene, Oregon 2017, 263–264 and 269; D. Bradshaw, St. Maximus on Time, Eternity, and Divine Knowledge, in: https://www.academia.edu/17836492/, 5.

142 1Cor., 3:9: Θεού γαρ εσμέν συνεργοί, Θεοῦ γεώργιον, Θεοῦ οἰκοδομή ἐστε.

143 De coelesti hierarchia (CH), 3, 2–3, ed. Heil/Ritter, 18–19 (PG 3, 165B; 168A).

144 A. Golitzin, *Et Introbo ad Altare Dei, The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita, with Special Reference to Its Predecessors in the Eastern Christian Tradition*, Thessalonike 1994, 86.

145 N. Loudovikos, Ontology Celebrated: Remarks of an Orthodox on Radical Orthodoxy, in:

Developing the topic further, Loudovikos emphasizes that the notion of the logos of being is a deeply relational term in Maximus and in the context of the Greek Patristic tradition, meaning both "a divine art of creating natures" and the divine will as an invitation to dialogue. In this dialogical process, natures become what they truly are. The divine *logoi* of human nature are existential/dialogical paths back to his Creator. Man is capable of entering into this dialogue only because he is free through and by nature. The human being is therefore able to actively participate in the synergy through which God puts His intentions in dialogue with human intentions, which are different and free and may oppose Him or love Him.[146]

Speaking of synergy, it might be misleading, David Bradshaw notes in this context, if it suggests a picture of two equal agents who simply choose to work together. Since in this case one is the Creator and the other the created, the activity of the latter depends in its reality on the active support of the former. The envisaged dialogical synergy here, the cooperation of God and man, is neither a symmetrical relation nor one in which the divine overpowers and replaces the human.[147] Human creativity has its crucial place in God's plan and its realization. A deeper understanding of its character requires an interpretation of the concepts of "nature" and "hypostasis"—both in general and specifically with regard to the human being.

Encounter Between Eastern Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy. Transfiguring the World Through the Word, eds. A. Pabst, C. Schneider, Ashgate 2008, 147–148.

146 N. Loudovikos, *Analogical Identities: The Creation of the Christian Self. Beyond Spirituality and Mysticism in the Patrisitc Era*, Turnhout 2019, 276–277, 311 and 347.

147 D. Bradshaw, The Concept of the Divine Energies, in: *Philosophy and Theology*, 18/1 (2006), 106.

CHAPTER 3

Nature and Hypostasis

1 Nature/Essence

Following the main line of Byzantine philosophical thought, early authors redefine almost all the concepts inherited from the Hellenic tradition. Central to this redefinition are the concepts "nature" and "essence," viewed as synonymous since at least the 4th century.

An exception to this rule is the view of Michael Psellus. Unlike almost the entire Byzantine tradition, according to him, essence (οὐσία) and nature (φύσις) are not identical concepts. Nature is a force-δύναμις that can only be grasped through noetic contemplation. It is implanted (ἐγκατεσπαρμένη) by God into bodies, that is, into the elements and the things that compose them. It is ἀρχή of movement and rest.[1] The φύσις is not an independent principle but a tool of divine omnipotence, ὄργανον τοῦ θεοῦ. In this sense φύσις is an "intermediary" between God and the world. It is the constitutive form through which a natural thing assumes its shape and actually becomes a φυσικόν.[2] Essence is the eidetic determination of the being.[3]

The introduction of a nuance between the two concepts has also been noted in Leontius of Byzantium. Although in his texts, including *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos*, he too affirms the identity between "essence" and "nature" on principle in this writing, in the midst of his criticism of Severus of Antioch, he deviates from their complete synonymy. While nature contains everything proper to the individual except individual being, essence is the being of a thing before all its qualitative determinations. This unequivocally maintained distinction becomes relatively clear in his differentiation between "community according to nature" (κοινωνία κατὰ τὴν φύσιν), "unification according to essence" (καθ'οὐσίαν ἕνωσις), and "composite nature" (φύσις σύνθετος). While in the first, natures are preserved, and in the second, it remains in the realm of naming, in the third, as an effect of union according to nature, the nature of the composite is not identical to the natures of its components.[4] The overall position, however, seems to be different.

1 Michael Psellos, *De omnifaria doctrina*, 57, in: *Michael Psellus. De omnifaria doctrina*, ed. L.G. Westerink, Utrecht 1948 (ed. Westerink), 40, 2–11.

2 Cf. L. Benakis, *Texts and Studies on Byzantine Philosophy*, Athens 2002, 342, 364 and 396.

3 Michael Psellos, De omnfaria doctrina, 121 and 131, ed. Westerink, 65, 1–6 et 69, 2–3.

4 Т.А. Щукин, Тождество в различии: сущность и природа у Леонтия Византийского, в:

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In a Christian context, the concept of "nature" (as well as "hypostasis") was further interpreted—mainly in its triadological aspect—by Origen and Athanasius of Alexandria. It must be admitted that, at that time, the position was far from being definitively strict. This can be relatively easily observed, for example, through the formulations in the *Creed*, established at the First Economic Council. To give another example, in the passage already quoted, Athanasius names the inseparable unity of the Trinity "person" (πρόσωπον), and the three bearers of this unity "hypostases.".[5] The paradigmatic definition was coined by the Cappadocians.

In the text known as *Letter 38* by Basil the Great, "nature" is introduced as the name that denotes "common nature" (κοινὴ φύσις), and not the specific being. The community of nature (κοινότης τῆς φύσεως) extends equally over all things falling under the same name. These πράγματα, described by one and the same definition of essence/οὐσία (identified with nature/φύσις), are consubstantial (ὁμοούσιοι). "Essence/nature" underlies the thing designated by this term and indicates its species.[6]

Broadly speaking, the Cappadocians attribute the name "essence" to the so-called second essence (δεύτερα οὐσία) in Aristotle. For Aristotle, "essence" in the truest, primary and most unconditional sense is the single being: it is the first or primary essence. Secondary essences express the species and genera under which the primary essences fall.[7] The secondary essences do not know "more or less", as Aristotle insists:[8] they are the community in relation to which the individual beings are indistinguishable. This circumstance is emphasized by the Cappadocians. Nature is one, united with itself and is an indivisible monad. It does not multiply by addition, diminish by subtraction (οὐκ αὐξανομένη διὰ προσθήκες, οὐ μειουμένη δι' ὑφαιρέσεως), and is not divided among individuals who partake of it.[9]

The case with the simple and non-compound essence of God is a special one. The peculiar properties of the coessential hypostases, by which they differ and relate to each other, do not arise from accidents external to their identical

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Логика и онтология в византийской догматической полемике. Очерки, сост. Д.С. Бирюков, В.М. Лурье, Санкт-Петербург ²2020 [T.A. Stukin, *Identity in Difference: Essence and Nature in Leontius of Byzantium*, in: *Logic and Ontology in Byzantine Dogmatic Polemics: Essays*, eds. D. Biriukov, B.M. Lourié, St. Petersburg ²2020—Russian], 137–142.

5 Athanasius Alexandrinus, Sermo in annuntiationem sanctissimae dominae nostrae deiparae, in: PG 28, 920A.

6 Basilius Magnus, Epistula 38, 2–3, in: PG 32, 325B–328C.

7 Categoriae, 5, 2a11–19.

8 Topica, 2, 115b8–10.

9 Gregorius Nyssenus, *Ad Ablabium* quod non sint tres die, in: PG 45, 120B.

essence. The divine nature is continuous: the divine being and life are unitary and identical. The essence is not God in three gods. It is itself a numerically unitary being. God is one being (essence) in three beings (hypostases).[10]

The Cappadocians do not question the real presence of a common nature in the created world. But, according to them, it does not exist otherwise than in the individuals containing the respective nature. They especially value the way they draw the distinction between common nature and the individual bearer of that nature. We cannot be accused, Gregory of Nyssa proudly asserts, of melting down the concept of hypostasis into common nature (ἐν τῷ κοινῷ τῆς φύσεως τὸν τῶν ὑποστάσεως λόγον συντίκτειν).[11] In the line of thought between the Cappadocians and John Damascene, the rule is established that "essence" can only be predicated for self-subsistent beings.[12]

The anti-Platonist Photius of Constantinople is particularly strict in not defining essence in the sense of Aristotle's "primary" essence.[13] Essence, in its proper sense, is something self-existent (πρᾶγμα αὐθύπαρκτον), namely, independent of the existence of anything else, whereby non-being is regarded as its opposite, he asserts. Each essence *par excellence* acts autonomously regarding its direction and integrity. Drawing attention to the identity between "essence" and "nature," he puts emphasis on what is meant by the category of "essence" is the "common *logos* of essence." In accordance with this, the essential similarity of the individuals formed by it is recognized. In this sense, essence is characterized as "the very *eidos* of individuals" (τὸ προσεχέστατον τοῖς ἀτόμοις εἶδος).

After clarifying the definition, Photius undertakes a sharp critique of Aristotle's division of essence into first and second. According to Aristotle, the so-called first essence, i.e., the individual, is an essence in a more proper sense. "Essentialness" decreases to the extent that the universality covered by the

10 Cf. Г.В. Флоровский, *Восточные отцы IV века*, Париж 1931 (*repr*. Москва 1992) [G. Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers of the 4th Century* (Paris 1931), repr. Moskow 1992], 74–84, 107–109 and 144–145; K. Janakiev, The Conception of the Holy Trinity according to Boethius and the Cappadocian Fathers, in: *Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter? Qu'est-ce que la philosophie au moyen âge? What is Philosophy in the Middle Ages?* (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 26), eds. J.A. Aertsen, A. Speer, Berlin–New York 1998, 954–955; R. Hübner, Gregor von Nyssa als Verfasser der sog. Ep. 38. Zum unterschiedlichen Verständnis der οὐσία bei den kappadozischen Brüdern, in: *Epektasis* (melanges offerts au J. Danielou), eds. J. Fontaine, C. Kannengiesser, Paris 1972, 468–483.

11 Gregorius Nyssenus, Ad Ablabium, quod non sint tres diii, in: PG 45, 133D.

12 Cf. Johannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 4; 10; 39, in: *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, Bd. 1, ed. B. Kotter, Berlin–New York 1969 (ed. Kotter 1), 57, 3–58, 13; 77, 100–104; 106, 2 (PG 94, 536C–537B; 564A; 605B).

13 Photius, Amphilochiae (Amph.), 138, in: PG 101, 768D–781A.

essence increases. Aristotle, writes Photius, places the concept of "particular essence" (μερικὴ οὐσία) primarily among the categories. It is, according to him, the immediately apprehended essence, and in the strongest sense: the particular human, the particular horse, etc., i.e., individual things. Still called "second essence," the universal essence (καθόλου οὐσία) Aristotle defines as that in which the individual essence (ἄτομος οὐσία) is present as a mental form: man in general, living being in general. Photius shows that such a definition calls into question the category of "essence" because then "essence" cannot be spoken of as "first" and "second" synonymously, but only homonymously. But this leads to a disintegration of the definition. For Photius, naming them as essences with the addition of "first" or "second" is proof that they are not defined by the concept of "essence," but by some other more fundamental concept. In order to discover the common *logos* of the generic essence (ὁ κοινὸς λόγος τῆς γενικῆς οὐσίας), from which the derivation of the synonymous label "essence" would be possible, Photius names properties that must belong entirely to the essence containing the respective *logos* and the requisite difference, thanks to which it may legitimately bear the name "category." Essence is first and foremost subjectless; it is not in a subject—μὴ εἶναι ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ. The second general characteristic is that essence as essence can be opposed by nothing. Thirdly, it is impossible for essence to be present more or less. Fourthly, the self-identity of essence must be preserved in any accidental change in the subject.

Photius concludes that Aristotle has been careless and even reckless in his approach to defining essence, and discusses two additional properties to be encountered in Aristotle. One is that essence denotes the particular thing (τὸ τόδε τι) proper only to the "first essence." The other is that the essence is expressed synonymously, and this feature is peculiar only to the "second essence." Therefore, Photius writes, Aristotle draws on another criterion to claim that the single essence is more essence. It is a matter of demanding that "essence" be rather called that which more fully manifests or elucidates the object. Photius, however, shows that if one decides to call "essence" the individual, rather than the species, and the species, rather than the genus, accidental rather than necessary features come to the fore. If one wants to consider, for example, Socrates as an essence in the proper sense, then the reason should not be the fact that he is a human being or a living being, but that he happened to have been a philosopher in Athens. Photius himself rejects the possibility for the individual or the so-called particular essence (μερικὴ οὐσία) being defined as essence according to the *logos* of essence. He insists that only what Aristotle calls "secondary essence" can be defined as essence because only it can be expressed synonymously while preserving all the properties necessarily inher-

ent to it. It is not very difficult to see that, in defining essence, Photius follows the tradition of the Fathers. However, about five centuries separate the Cappadocians from Photius.

In his definitions Maximus the Confessor summarizes what has been achieved prior to him and extends it. He defines the concept of "nature" as that which is the common (species, εἶδος) for all individual beings in which this nature is, and which *are* through it. "Essence" denotes the being-presence of nature, expressed for the various hypostases that are bearers of that nature.[14] Maximus identifies "essence" and "nature" traditionally. His definition states: "Essence (οὐσία) and nature (φύσις) mean one and the same thing. Both concepts are common and universal (κοινὸν καὶ καθόλου), as they are always predicated for different hypostases and never with respect to a particular single person (πρόσωπον)".[15] It is characteristic of essence to be expressed and manifested for all and in all things according to nature. For that which is commonly and generically predicated of certain things constitutes the definition of their essence, the privation of which leads to the destruction of the corresponding nature, since no beings remain what they are when they are deprived of their natural, constituent elements.[16] Natural properties do not undergo any change, reduction or amplification under any circumstances, including when multiple natures co-inhere in a composite hypostasis.[17]

John Damascene remarks that "being" and "essence" do not refer to each other as genus to species. While "being" may be expressed for self-existing things as well as for those that do not exist independently but thanks to another, "essence" designates only that which has existence in itself (πρᾶγμα αὐθύπαρκτον). Thus, "essence" is both God and every creation, although God is a supereessential essence.[18] Unlike the Hellenic philosophers, he notes, the holy fathers identify "essence," "nature," and "form" (εἶδος). Through them, they express the commonality, spoken of about many things, primarily the species (εἶδος), but also the genera, including the highest of them. The nature or essence of a being is also the origin of their movement and rest.[19] Damascene defines nature as the

14 Cf. Opuscula theologica et polemica (ThPol), 26, in: PG 91, 276AB.

15 Cf. ThPol, 14, in: PG 91, 149BC.

16 Ambigua ad Thomam (AmbTh), 2, in: PG 91, 1037CD.

17 ThPol, 14, in: PG 91, 149D.

18 Cf. Dialectica, 4; 10; 39, in: ed. Kotter 1, 57, 3–58, 13; 77, 100–104; 106, 2 (PG 94, 536C–537B; 564A; 605B).

19 Cf. Dialectica, 5; 10; 30; 41, in: ed. Kotter 1, 60, 2–62, 95; 76, 71–77, 91; 92, 2–95, 34; 107, 2–15 (PG 94, 541D–544A; 564A; 589C–596A; 608AB). Cf. K. Janakiev, A. Speer, Physis, in: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, Bd. 6, München–Zürich 1993, 2122–2123.

common *logos* of the being of things having the same essence, while "hypostasis" marks the independent existence of each nature.[20]

Already in the 6th century, with Leontius of Byzantium, a significant differentiation appears between nature simply (or at all—ἁπλῶς) and in itself, on the one hand, and nature in the individual subject, on the other. "Nature simply" or common nature exists and can be observed concretely only in some individual thing (ἐπὶ τῆς ἕν τινι θεωρουμένη), in relations and in things (ἐν σχέσει καὶ πράγμασι).[21] This nature has an actual being which does not take the form of some preexisting autonomous independence, but only as subsisting in some hypostasis. Nature does not precede existentially individual beings, which are its bearers.

This position can be met almost literally in John Damascene, who elaborates it further. Every nature, he insists, is defined as what it is, not in an equal, but in a twofold sense. First, when it is considered in itself in its general meaning, not represented in an individual. Then it is called nature of the species or nature contemplated in the species (ἐν τῷ εἴδει θεωρουμένη φύσις). Second, when contemplated as existing in the concrete individual (ἐν τῷ ἀτόμῳ θεωρουμένη φύσις) with existence corresponding only to it. In both cases, it is about one and the same nature. But in the first case it is considered purely speculatively and in the second in the situation of its actual existence. The difference is that—for example—a living rational mortal being in me does not entirely coincide with any of those in the rest of humanity, but bears the characteristics peculiar only to me and to no one else.[22] The purpose of this distinction is to avoid focusing on logical abstraction and concentrate on actual existence, on insisting that a particular hypostasis is not identical to hypostases of the same species but is similar to them.[23] Nature is considered in its existential activity.

The position thus explained will lead (especially after John Damascene's criticism of John Philoponus) to ignoring the concept of a "particular (or private) essence" (μερικὴ οὐσία), which the Cappadocians[24] and their immediate intellectual successors positively presumed to be in the same class of concepts as "individual," "hypostasis," and "person." By "particular essence" was meant something like hypostasis, but without hypostatic properties, such as

20 De haeresibus, in: PG 94, 745B.

21 Adversus argumenta Severi, in: PG 86bis, 1917AB и 1920A.

22 Johannes Damascenus, De haeresibus, in: PG 94, 745B–748C. Cf. Id., Expositio fidei, III, 11, in: *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, Bd. 2, ed. B. Kotter, Berlin–New York 1973 (ed. Kotter 2), 131, 2–21 (PG 94, 1021D–1024A).

23 Johannes Damascenus, Institutio elementaris ad dogmata, 2, in: PG 95, 101A.

24 Cf. e.g. Gregorius Nyssenus, Ad graecos, ex communibus notionibus, in: PG 45, 177CD.

an individual, perfectly identical with the other individuals of that essence. Already in Porphyry the term represents an over-interpretation of Aristotle's "first essence," through which the individuality of the individual is considered separately from the individualizing properties, conceived as inalienable accidents-συμβεβηκότα. Finally, with Maximus the Confessor,[25] the particular (μερικόν) and the proper (ἴδιον) are equated and entirely attributed to the hypostasis.[26]

These and similar definitions seem to be the basis for the following reflection of Photius of Constantinople: Synonyms like "man," "human nature," "the species man" are logical concepts (λογικὰ ὀνόματα), which cannot be predicated for something actual and self-existing but only with respect to the thing which is said to possess what is meant by them. Humanity (ἡ ἀνθρωπότης) as well as Divinity (ἡ θεότης), however, are names of natural things (φυσικῶν πραγμάτων ὀνόματα), existing by nature. With "man," we express the nature internally available to the hypostasis, with "humanity," we name the same nature, but not as internally available to the hypostasis, but in itself, in its activity, mentally abstracted from matter.[27] "Divinity" and "humanity" respectively denote divine and human nature in their inherent action.

Nature/essence is primarily conceived as a specific constitutive dynamic, realized through its own powers and energies. Even the earliest Hellenic philosophers consider nature as the inner constitution or make-up of the thing: the norm of the existing thing. This norm expresses itself as the internal power of the existing thing in its capacity to exert some influence. The nature spoken of by these philosophers is necessarily conceived as active and self-expressive.[28] This line is decisively continued in Byzantine philosophical thinking.

It is well known that many modern western theoreticians resist the concept of essence. This is a reaction against a kind of terminological inertia in Western philosophy that seeks to reduce essence to a logical-epistemological *abstractum*—"essence," understood as both general and impersonal, yet also "real," objectively present in every individual. This resistance has been clearly outlined by Karl Marx in his *Thesen über Feuerbach* from 1845. Rightly perplexed by the objectification of the cognitive abstraction "essence," Marx veers

25 ThPol, 14, in: PG 91, 152A.

26 В.М. Лурье, *История византийской философии*, С. Петербург 2006 [B.M. Lourié, *The History of Byzantine Philosophy: The Formative Period*, St. Petersburg 2006—Russian], 331–332 and 349.

27 Photius, Amphilochiae, 27; 51; 230, in: PG, 101, 197AB; 204A; 205B; 465C; 1288D–1289C.

28 Ц. Бояджиев, *Кратка история на античната философия от нейните начала до епохата на елинизма*, София 2022 [T. Boiadjiev, *A Brief History of Ancient Philosophy from Its Beginnings to the Hellenistic Era*, Sofia 2022—Bulgarian], 17.

to the other extreme, formulating a radically relational anthropology.[29] Driven by a nausea for the absurdity of such a kind of being, Jean-Paul Sartre, for instance, uses the terms "essence" and "nature" to refer to the actual "image" or "figure" of the individual Self. However, Sartre is also fully aware that by means of his or her potential capacities every human being is a human, not "moss, mold or cauliflower." This is why he is forced to accept the existence of conditional human universality (*une universalité humaine de condition*). He prefers to speak of "human condition" (*condition de l'homme*) rather than "human nature" (*de sa nature*). This condition is "the ensemble of the *a priori* boundaries that outline the fundamental human situation in the universe" (*l'ensemble des limites a priori qui esquissent sa situation fondamentale dans l'univers*). These boundaries are neither objective nor subjective but have both objective and subjective aspects. The existential human project aims at redrawing and rearranging them, overcoming them, or adapting to them.[30] One should also add that drawing these boundaries does not delimit an empty space but actual human potentialities, the potentialities of humans that are realized and actualized through their actions. The Byzantine understanding of "essence" and "nature" could be even described in a very similar way. The essence or nature of a thing is primarily a source of energetic manifestations. The natural properties of the thing can only be known through its energies and activities.[31]

2 Hypostasis

In Byzantine thinkers' reordering and redefinition of the conceptual apparatus of Hellenic philosophy, the concept of "hypostasis" comes to the forefront. This

29 "5. Feuerbach, not satisfied with **abstract thinking**, wants **sensuous contemplation**; but he does not conceive sensuousness as **practical**, human-sensuous activity. 6. Feuerbach resolves the essence of religion into the essence *of man* [the human nature]. But the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In reality, it is the ensemble of the social relations. Feuerbach, who does not enter upon a criticism of this real essence is hence obliged: 1. To abstract from the historical process and to define the religious sentiment regarded by itself, and to presuppose an abstract—*isolated*—human individual. 2. The essence therefore can by him only be regarded as 'species', as an inner 'dumb' generality which unites many individuals in a **natural** way"—K. Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, in: https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/index.htm, accessed August 11, 2023 [with my corrections in the translation GK].

30 J.-P. Sartre, *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, in: http://www.danielmartin.eu/Textes/Existentialisme.htm, accessed August 11, 2023.

31 G. Kapriev, Actor-Network-Theory and Byzantine Philosophy, in: *Analogia: The Pemptousia Journal for Theological Studies*, 12–13 (2021), 60–61.

arises from the fact that they encounter a problem unknown to antiquity—the problem of personal salvation: not the fate of human nature, not of humanity, but of the person, of the human hypostasis. When sometimes there is talk of the "priority of the personal and existential," it refers to the priority of observation and attention on a soteriological and psychological level. If one wants to assert a "personalism" of Christian philosophy, it is acceptable in this sense and only in this sense. On the ontological level the concepts of "hypostasis" and "nature" are equal.

It has been noted that, in the Byzantine tradition, intellectual activity was focused on the interpretation of the individual as individual within the Christological debates of the fifth century and thereafter. At that time, the concept of "hypostasis" was adopted to designate the personal individuality of Christ, establishing that his human nature stood in the same consubstantial relationship with humanity as His divine nature stood with the other persons of the Trinity.[32] The concepts of "essence" and "nature" then take central place in Christian philosophical thought through their constant comparison with the concept of "hypostasis," with which they are in continuous connection and inevitable opposition.

"Essence" and "nature" aim at the universal, conceived as a "concrete universal,"[33] present in its respective individual carriers. The Fathers call the separate individual (ἄτομον), hypostasis (ὑπόστασις), person (πρόσωπον), John Damascene explains.[34] The hypostasis, considered as coinciding with the individual and the person (when it is a hypostasis of a rational nature), is what must have essence, along with accompanying properties, to be self-existent and perceptible by the senses, that is, to be actually.[35] The hypostasis is existence in itself (ἡ καθ' ἑαυτό ἐστιν ὕπάρξις).[36] Hypostasis cannot be thought of without nature.[37] But at the same time no nature coincides with its hypostasis. The two concepts are mutually exclusive, including in the Deity.[38]

From the outset, it is maintained that the hypostasis (respectively—in triadology, Christology, angelology and anthropology—the person) is inherent to

32 J. Zachhuber, *The Rise of Christian Theology and the End of Ancient Metaphysics. Patristic Philosophy from the Cappadocian Fathers to John of Damascus*, Oxford 2020, 11.

33 J.-C. Larchet, *La théologie des énergies divines: des origines à saint Jean Damascène*, Paris 2010, 333.

34 Cf. Johannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 5; 30; 41, in: ed. Kotter 1, 61, 66–62, 77; 93, 3–95, 34; 107, 8–12 (PG 94, 541CD; 589C–596A; 608AB).

35 Johannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 30, in: ed. Kotter 1, 94, 23–95, 34 (PG 94, 592B–596A).

36 Johannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 66, in: ed. Kotter 1, 140, 36 (PG 94, 669A).

37 Maximus Confessor, ThPol, 23, in: PG 91, 264A.

38 Maximus Confessor, Ep., 15, in: PG 91, 549C.

the essence (ἐνούσιος), without it following that one can speak—in the case of the Trinity—of three essences.[39] The same is claimed for human essence and its hypostases,[40] as well as for the relationship between nature and hypostasis, for example in the case of a horse or a dog.[41] This applies to every nature—whether rational or non-rational, or a lifeless one.[42] But the hypostasis inherent in essence is not reducible to a "mere property" of nature. Rather nature itself is "appropriated" by hypostasis since nature has existence only as inherent to hypostasis (ἐνυπόστατος) and appears itself in individuals according to its existence. The "enhypostatic" (τὸ ἐνυπόστατον) cannot be known in itself (καθ' αὐτὸ), although its reality cannot be understood as some kind of mental product or accident: it is a truly existing form (εἶδος πραγματικῶς). In their mutual immanence, the enhypostatic manifests what is intrinsic to existence (τὸ ἐνυπόστατον δελοῖ τὸ ἐνύπαρκτον) and the hypostasis gains the ability to realize natural energy.[43]

The Cappadocians are practically unanimous in their innovative explanation of this term, regardless of the differences established between them today in, for example, the interpretation of the concept of "essence." In their Trinitarian speculation, they opt for "hypostasis" (ὑπόστασις), a word which, in Aristotle, serves as a non-conceptual designation for the presence of something real in contrast to something apparent, imaginary. In the interpretation of the Cappadocians, "hypostasis" distinguishes the existence of the individual being, not only in terms of its common essence, but also in terms of its indispensable characteristics, which find expression in its distinctive marks (γνωρίσματα or ἰδιώματα), distinguishing it from all other beings participating in the same nature. The concept of "hypostasis" expresses, not the individualizing feature, but its subject, for whom the feature is expressed. For this reason, the hypostasis is conceived as an autonomous being. The emphasis in triadological speculation does not fall on listing the differences between the Persons but on insisting that each of them exists in its own hypostasis, insofar as even Sabellius does not deny a hypostasis-less figure for each Person. This also applies to individuals of any other nature. In the context of triadology and anthropology, Gregory of Nyssa draws a categorical distinction between "essence" and "hypostasis," putting emphasis on the "hypostasis constituted in a certain way"

39 Gregorius Nyssenus, Ad graecos, ex communibus notionibus, in: PG 45, 177A.

40 Ibid., in: PG 45, 177D.

41 Ibid., in: PG 45, 184AB.

42 Cf. ibid., in: PG 45, 184CD.

43 Maximus Confessor, ThPol, 14, in: PG, 91, 149C–153A; Id., ThPol, 16, in: PG 91, 205AB; Id., ThPol, 23, in: PG 91, 260D–268A.

(τοιάδε ὑπόστασις), through which the hypostases of one and the same essence differ among themselves, such as, for example, the "man constituted in a certain way" (τοιόσδε ἄνθρωπος)—Peter, Paul, Barnabas—just as each of the hypostases of the Trinity is τοιόσδε Θεός, without, however, representing any τοιάδε οὐσία in this way.[44]

Adapted in order to discipline triadological dogmatic definitions, the Cappadocian concept of hypostasis exhibits deficiencies within the later Christological debate. Accompanying factors include the not-yet-fixed terminology and distinct conceptual apparatus used with regard to theology and economy (finally overcome by Maximus the Confessor). Not only these, however. The mechanical application of the Cappadocian definition of hypostasis, which emphasizes specific characteristic features, creates an excessive asymmetry between the two natures in Christ, as His human nature does not have its own hypostasis.

Leontius of Byzantium[45] is the thinker who managed to overcome the tension between defining hypostasis through characteristic features and through its self-subsistence. Without denying or undervaluing the properties providing the uniqueness of the hypostasis, he emphasizes the formative significance of the being-for-itself (τὸ καθ' ἑαυτὸ εἶναι) and existing-for-itself (καθ' ἑαυτὸ ὑπαρχειν)—the hypostasis exists perfectly in and of itself, not simply (or abstractly) and not in any way previously (οὐχ ἁπλῶς οὐδὲ προηγουμένως).[46] In this way, this level is accentuated in the constitution of the hypostasis, from which its independence results: it is not derived from the nature contained within it. Two non-subordinated conceptual orders are formed: the order of the natural and the order of the hypostatic. Thus, the emphasis is placed on that level in the constitution of the hypostasis, which determines its autonomy: it does not derive from the nature hypostasized in it. Two non-subordinate orders of concepts are formed: the natural and the hypostatic.

Leontius' extension of the definition of hypostasis, which follows the derivation of the possibility of two or more natures being present in a hypostasis rather than just one, is particularly productive. This condition is fixed with the concept of "ἐνυπόστατον," "inherent in the hypostasis." Through the one hypostasis of Christ, both natures, divine and human, are also proper to Him

44 Gregorius Nyssenus, Ad graecos, ex communibus notionibus, in: PG 45, 181CD.

45 About Leontius, cf. A.M. Ritter, Leontios der Eremit bzw. von Byzanz, in: *Die Philosophie der Kaiserzeit und der Spätantike* (Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Die Philosophie der Antike, Bd. 5), eds. C. Horn, C. Riedweg, D. Wyrwa, Basel 2018, 2263–2267.

46 Leontius Byzantinus, Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos, in: PG 86, 1280AB; Leontius Byzantinus, Solutio argumentorum Severi, in: PG 86bis, 1917D and 1945A.

together with their natural characteristics,[47] where the hypostasis is not simply a set of accidents but has a *logos* of its own existence—λόγος τῆς ὑπάρξεως.[48] In this context and sense, Leontius also uses terms like "in-hypostasized union" (ἐνυπόστατος ἕνωσις),[49] "hypostatic unity" (ἕνωσις ὑποστατική)[50] or "union according to hypostasis" (ἕνωσις καθ' ὑπόστασιν).[51] All these concepts have been adjudged to have a long life, Basil Lourié notes, although not necessarily with the meanings invested by Leontius with his inclination towards the Origenism of his time.[52]

Hypostasis and in-hypostasized (ἐνυπόστατον) are not one and the same, Leontius insists, just as essence and in-essence-inherent (ἐνούσιον) are not the same. Hypostasis expresses the particular thing, while in-hypostasized expresses the essence. The nature that cannot exist and cannot be without hypostasis perceives the *logos* of being (τοῦ εἶναι λόγος), and the hypostasis—the *logos* of being as a self-existent (τοῦ καθ' ἑαυτὸν εἶναι). The *logos* of the species (εἴδους λόγος), proper to the nature, demonstrates the characteristics of the universal in the thing (καθολικοῦ πράγματος χαρακτῆρα δηλοῖ) and the hypostasis separates the proper (τὸ ἴδιον) from the universal. The hypostasis expresses the characterizing properties (χαρακτηριστικοὶ ἰδιώματα) and the in-hypostasized (τὸ ἐνυπόστατον), which is the essence, shows that the hypostasis is not something accidental (μὴ εἶναι συμβεβηκὸς), which has being in something else, but is considered in itself. In defining the hypostasis, Leontius' emphasis falls on its "logos of independent being," making it capable of "synthesizing" in itself more than one nature as well, in order to arrive at the expanding definition-ὅρος: hypostases are either those things that are identical in nature but differ among themselves in number, or consist of different natures, and in the community of their being they manifest what is acquired from both. The names of the two natures are preserved in their hypostatic union, where their unity is realized through the exchange of properties (ἀντίδοσις τῶν ἰδιωμάτον), preserving the proper logos of each nature: their mutual difference is recognized precisely through this exchange within one hypostasis.[53]

47 Leontius Byzantinus, Solutio argumentorum Severi, in: PG 86bis, 1945C.

48 Leontius Byzantinus, Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos, in: PG 86, 1285A.

49 Leontius Byzantinus, Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos, in: PG 86, 1300A.

50 Ibid., 1308C.

51 Ibid., 1348D.

52 В.М. Лурье, *История византийской философии*, С. Петербург 2006 [B.M. Lourié, *The History of Byzantine Philosophy: The Formative Period*, St. Petersburg 2006—Russian], 160. Cf. J. Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian thought*, Washington 1969, 43–49.

53 Leontius Byzantinus, Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos, in: PG 86, 1277C–1280B and

When defining the term "hypostasis," Maximus the Confessor refers simultaneously to the two definitions formed within the tradition before him, considering "hypostasis" and "person" as equivalent. The initial definition states: "Hypostasis and person signify one and the same thing." Both exist separately and with distinct properties (μερικόν τε καὶ ἴδιον) relative to their contents (ὡς ἐφ' ἑαυτῶν τήν περιγραφήν).[54] Therefore, the distinctive feature of the hypostasis is that it not only differs by number from the other hypostases of the same species, but is also treated as self-existent in every respect.[55] According to another broader definition, "hypostasis" is defined as something that exists separately and by itself, while simultaneously being an essence together with particular or unique properties which makes it different not only in number from the hypostases of the same species.[56] These particular and unique properties (τοῖς χαρακτηριστικοῖς ἰδιώμασι)[57] make an individual of a given species different, already as a hypostasis, from other individuals of the same species. "Hypostasis" means the unrepeatably separate (καθ'ἕκαστον), the uniquely particular (ἰδικόν).[58]

Specifically commenting on the human hypostasis, John Damascene notes that, in humans, nature is one and the same, while the hypostases are separate and differentiated from each other both in place and time and by their ordering in relation to things, as well as by many other characteristics (καὶ τὴν πρὸς τὰ πράγματα διάθεσιν καὶ ἕτερα πλεῖστα), thereby their volitions and gnomic dispositions (τὰ θελήματα καὶ αἱ γνῶμαι) are also different.[59] In a detailed consideration and precisely with regard to the will and its modes of action, John distinguishes between the will as a natural power and the unique hypostatic action of the will: the will of man has both a constitutive natural shape and an actualizing hypostatic shape, which is unique. The hypostasis has its own

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1289C. Cf. Т.А. Щукин, Тождество в различии: сущность и природа у Леонтия Византийского, в: *Логика и онтология в византийской догматической полемике. Очерки*, сост. Д.С. Бирюков, В.М. Лурье, Санкт-Петербург ²2020 [T.A. Stukin, *Identity in Difference: Essence and Nature in Leontius of Byzantium*, in: *Logic and Ontology in Byzantine Dogmatic Polemics: Essays*, eds. D. Biriukov, B.M. Lourié, St. Petersburg ²2020—Russian], 135–136.

54 ThPol, 14, in: PG 91, 152A.

55 Ibid., 14, 152D.

56 Ep., 15, in: PG 91, 557D.

57 ThPol, 26, in: PG 91, 276B; Ibid., 23, 261 B; 264A.

58 Cf. В.В. Петров, *Максим Исповедник: онтология и метод в византийской философии VII века*, Москва 2007 [V.V. Petrov, *Maximus the Confessor: Ontology and Method in 7th Century Byzantine Philosophy*, Moscow 2007—Russian], 17.

59 Johannes Damascenus, F.O., II, 22, in: ed. Kotter 2, 92, 114–117 (PG 94, 948B).

activity and movement.[60] The energy of the hypostatic movement is naturally uniform, but the mode of that movement is not the same.[61]

The hypostasis is not reducible solely to hypostatic property (ἰδιότης) or to the combination of this property and essence. It is a whole that is more than its parts. This is expressed precisely through the concept of the λόγος τῆς ὑποστάσεως—the principle of hypostasis. The balance and interaction between two types of distinguishing properties—συμβεβηκότα—are primarily described through the concept of the τρόπος τῆς ὑπάρξεως—mode of existence—regarding the hypostasis. On the one hand, there are accidents in the proper sense of the word, which can change, vary, disappear, etc. On the other hand, there are "inseparable properties," proper hypostatic peculiarities, which constitute the uniqueness of each of the hypostases as identical to itself throughout its existence. In both cases, it is about potencies inherently characteristic of human nature, not imported from somewhere beyond it.[62] The unique mode of existence of the hypostasis, unfolding one or another natural potentiality according to its own characteristic manner, is built up from previous experience, future projection, and current existence, while simultaneously guaranteeing their unity and continuity.[63] However, hypostatic selfhood is no reason for attributing to it any kind of personalistic aspect, according to which subjective freedom is a counterpoint to natural uniformity and necessity. It is a matter of subtle interaction between nature and hypostasis.[64]

The hypostasis outlines and describes the common and the indescribable as inherent to the particular thing (ὑπόστασίς ἐστιν, ἡ τό κοινόν τε καί ἀπερίγραπτον ἐν τῷ τινι ἰδίως παριστῶσα καί περιγράφουσα).[65] While genus and species are expressed according to the question "what is [the object]" (ἐν τῷ τὶ ἐστι) and the specific difference according to "what is [the object] like" (ἐν τῷ ὁποῖόν τὶ ἐστι), the hypostasis reveals "who is" (τίς ἐστιν): if one asks "who is this", we answer "Peter," if one asks "what is Peter," the answer is "a human being."[66] Nature itself is more of an "appropriation" of the hypostasis, as nature exists solely as in-

60 Johannes Damascenus, De duabus in Christo voluntatibus, in: PG 95, 21–24, 152B–153D.

61 S. Markov, *Die metaphysische Synthese des Johannes von Damaskus. Historische Zusammenhänge und Strukturtransformationen*, Leiden–Boston 2015, 221.

62 В.М. Лурье, *История византийской философии*, С. Петербург 2006 [B.M. Lourié, *The History of Byzantine Philosophy: The Formative Period*, St. Petersburg 2006—Russian], 233–234 and 363–364.

63 Cf. A. Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, London–New York 1996, 57–58.

64 S. Markov, *Die metaphysische Synthese des Johannes von Damaskus. Historische Zusammenhänge und Strukturtransformationen*, Leiden–Boston 2015, 145.

65 Maximus Confessor, Opuscula theological et polemica, 23, in: PG 91, 265C.

66 Johannes Damacenus, Dialectica, 17, in: ed. Kotter 1, 87, 1–16 (PG 94, 581C).

hypostasized (ἐνυπόστατον). Here one can speak of mutual immanence where the in-hypostasized is actually integrated into existence; it manifests what has been in-existentialized (τὸ ἐνυπόστατον δηλοῖ τὸ ἐνύπαρκτον), while the hypostasis acquires the ability to actualize natural energy.[67]

The concepts of "essence" and "nature" hold a central place in Christian thought through their inherent connection with the concept of hypostasis, with which they are in constant communication and mutual dependence. Immediately after providing a definition of ὑπόστασις and πρόσωπον, Maximus the Confessor introduces the concept of "ἐνούσιον": "Ἐνούσιον is that which is not only understood as having within itself the sum of the properties (τῶν ἰδιωμάτων ἄθρισμα), by which something is recognized as different from every other thing, but also as actually possessing what is common for the nature to which it belongs (τὸ κοινὸν τῆς πραγματικῶς κεκτημένον)."[68] It is important to point out that it is not only the universal (i.e. the species) which is in-hypostasized (it is actually, πραγματικῶς, present in the corresponding individuals),[69] but also the hypostasis itself is immanentized in essence. Essence is in-hypostasized to the same extent as hypostasis is in-essentialized. Ignoring the essence in its constitutive completeness, which definitively includes the universal, automatically discredits the hypostasis. Equally illegitimate is the detachment of nature from hypostasis and their insertion into a common format. On the contrary, they are impossible without each other but are in a mode of complementarity with each other.

Essence manifests itself in individuals in accordance with their existence. It is therefore always something that cannot be known solely in itself (καθ' αὐτὸ), although its actuality should be considered not as a mental product or contingency, but as a truly existing species (εἶδος πραγματικῶς).[70] If essence is to be thought of as actuality, then hypostasis must be thought of as actualization. Hypostasis is that which sets in motion the energy of essence. Maximus describes hypostasis as an acting subject (ἐνεργῶν).[71]

He insists that every human being first acts (ἐνεργεῖ) as a person and forms a specific mode of action (τὸν τῆς ἐνεργείας τρόπον) according to inner volitional disposition (κατὰ γνώμην). The difference in persons regarding the mode of action is recognized through their activity (πρᾶξις), while the uniformity of

67 Maximus Confessor, Opuscula theological et polemica (= ThPol), 16, in: PG 91, 205AB; Ibid., 23, 260D–268A.

68 ThPol, 14, in: PG 91, 152A.

69 ThPol, 14, in: PG 91, 149B.

70 Cf. ThPol, 23, in: PG 91, 149C–153A; Ibid., 16, 205AB.

71 ThPol, 16, in: PG 91, 205AC. Cf. ThPol, 26, in: PG 91, 260D–268A.

natural action follows from the *logos* of nature.[72] Every essence has one will and one energy. They are not the will and energy of the hypostases, but are carried by them, exactly in the sense in which the hypostases are carriers of their nature.[73] Natural will and natural energy are applied by the hypostasis. To will at all and to will in a certain way (πῶς θέλειν) is not one and the same, as John Damascene reminds us. The hypostasis is the one that realizes the natural principle, in such a way that the hypostatic realization of the natural will can even work against the natural principle.[74] The same applies to energy. It is inherent in nature, but the way it is applied depends on the hypostasis. The user of the will and energy is the agent, the person.[75] Natural energy is one and the same in all individuals that represent it. It is the carrier of the eidetic form. However, this form is being actualized hypostatically.

The hypostasis brings forth natural energy in accordance with its hypostatic properties. The character and intensity of this expression depend on the manner in which the hypostasis exists, thus the hypostatic properties leave a strong imprint on the manifestation of energy. This allows for speaking of natural energy in the plural.[76] The existential action of the specific hypostasis can be stronger or weaker, dispersed or concentrated; it can change its intensity and concentration over time through the complex of dispositions and characteristics uniquely inherent to each hypostasis.[77] Maximus illustrates this fact as follows: the ability to speak is natural, but the manner of speaking is hypostatic.[78] The only certainty is that natural energy (existential action) can never be lacking. And there is no principled difference whether we are talking about hypostasis or the energies of rational or non-rational beings.[79]

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72 ThPol, 10, in: PG 91, 137A.

73 Cf. Pyrrh., in: PG 91, 345D, 348C.

74 S. Markov, *Die metaphysische Synthese des Johannes von Damaskus. Historische Zusammenhänge und Strukturtransformationen*, Leiden–Boston 2015, 227.

75 F.O. III, 14; III, 15, in: PG 94, 1036AC; 1045C–1048B.

76 Cf. В.М. Лурье, *История византийской философии*, С. Петербург 2006 [B.M. Lourié, *The History of Byzantine Philosophy: The Formative Period*, St. Petersburg 2006—Russian], 378–379.

77 Cf. G. Kapriev, I. Tchalakov, Actor-Network Theory and Byzantine Interpretation of Aristotle's Theory of Action: Three Points of Possible Dialogue, in: *Yearbook of the Institute for Advanced Studies on Science, Technology and Society*, Volume 57, eds. A. Bamme, G. Getzinger, B. Wieser, München–Wien 2009, 212–224.

78 ThPol, 3, in: PG 91, 48A.

79 Cf. Г. Каприев, *Максим Изповедник. Въведение в мисловната му система*, София 2010 [G. Kapriev, *Maximus the Confessor: An Introduction to His System of Thought*, Sofia 2010—Bulgarian], 102–108; G. Kapriev, Actor-Network-Theory and Byzantine Philosophy, in: *Analogia: The Pemptousia Journal for Theological Studies*, 12–13 (2021), 60–61.

3 Hypostasis and Person

This is not the case with the identification or differentiation of "hypostasis" and "person"—ὑπόστασις and πρόσωπον. In the early stages, "hypostasis" is often equated with "nature" and therefore opposed to "person." The expression "the person of the hypostasis" can be found even in Gregory of Nyssa,[80] thereby distinguishing figure and form. The identification of "hypostasis" and "person" is the result of a long historical process. It begins with its rejection by Basil the Great, who was troubled by its approximation to modalism, continues through the conciliatory formulas of Gregory of Nazianzus, passes through their connection in the dogmatic definition of Chalcedon, and culminates in their identification in the conceptual network of Maximus the Confessor. This can be seen with "scandalous" clarity in one of his definitions. There he points out that essence and nature can never be defined by a single person.[81] The general sense of the definition, however, raises expectations for the use of "hypostasis."

This synonymy arises from the fact that both terms was used by Byzantine authors most often in the fields of triadology, Christology and anthropology. The differences appear in comparisons with other beings that are not objects in these fields of knowledge. Every self-existing being, bearer of nature/natures and unique properties, has its hypostasis, including non-rational entities such as stones, plants or houses, while πρόσωπον denotes only rational beings (God, angel, human being), who form their modes of action through rational will ("no one calls a mouse a person"[82]). John Damascene borrows the distinction drawn by John Philoponus. From this perspective, the person is determined by the specific capacity of the reasonable hypostasis to enter into relations with other hypostases. The example with which Damascene illustrates human personhood is symptomatic: Paul, when he spoke publicly from the stairs, being one among men, distinguished himself from the rest of men by the properties and effects of his actions.[83] It is about the hypostatic properties and effects in a specific personal relatedness to other hypostases.

Exactly from this specificity of personhood arises the ability through which one person can stand in for another. Within this horizon Damascene formulates the notion of "personal unification" (ἕνωσις προσωπική), illustrating it with the hiding of someone behind the person of another, and the notion of "rela-

80 Ad graecos, ex communibus notionibus, in: PG 45, 185B.

81 ThPol, 14, in: PG 91, 149B.

82 N. Loudovikos, *Analogical Identities: The Creation of the Christian Self. Beyond Spirituality and Mysticism in the Patrisitc Era*, Turnhout 2019, 320.

83 Johannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 43, in: ed. Kotter 1, 109, 3–9 (PG 94, 613B).

tional unification" (ἕνωσις σχετική), such as the relationship between friend and friend. Conversely, in "hypostatic unification" (καθ' ὑπόστασιν ἕνωσις) we are talking solely about things united in composite hypostasis.[84] We say that someone has taken on my person or laments another in his person, Damascene insists. We also say that the governor has the person of the emperor (τὸν ὕπαρχον δὲ πρόσοπων ἔχει τοῦ βασιλέως λέγομεν)[85]—he is delegated by the emperor and represents him. Hypostasis, however, cannot be delegated and represented.

The focus of the term "hypostasis" falls on the individual self-determined being, while "person" refers rather to the specific actions associated with the personal properties in the context of their relational aspects regarding others. It is therefore possible for a person to stand in place of or act instead of another, while it is not possible for the hypostasis itself to act in a similar manner. In this sense, "person" denotes the ability of a rationally endowed hypostasis to enter into non-spontaneous relationships and relate to other hypostases involved in those relationships.

There is a certain paradox: if we argue that each hypostasis emits the energies inherent το the in-hypostasized nature (or natures), then every self-existent being should be in a continuous state of active relational exchange with other hypostases. In other words, it should be dialogical in its existence by necessity, becoming part of a "dialogical network" of relations including relations with the Divine. In contrast, every man as a rational being is preordained with the duty to be dialogical: a rational man should be in communion and relational as part of his constitutional characteristics, to establish himself as freedom and love—two properties which, obviously, he may or may not possess in moments of selfishness, self-closing, isolation. There is therefore a certain discontinuity in the communion and relationality that can be assigned to the human person. Every rational reflection is, by definition, a procedural cessation of spontaneous action. Each movement of the human mind or self-consciousness "discredits" the action and introduces an alternative. The person controls and regulates their relations. It is precisely this that introduces the nuance distinguishing "person" from "hypostasis" in the general sense of the words.

The primary characteristic of the person prompts some contemporary thinkers who tend to philosophize within this tradition to argue that relations are constitutive of the person/hypostasis. The person and the hypostasis are primarily viewed as σχέσις, as relation, which results in a relational theory of the

84 Johannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 65, in: ed. Kotter 1, 136, 118–127 (PG 94, 664B).

85 Johannes Damascenus, De haeresibus, 83, in: PG 94, 749C.

hypostasis/person that unfolds into a relational ontology: a "personal ontology of relations." Of course, there are such theories and some of them have been developed consistently. Relational anthropology, however, stands in contradiction to authoritative Christian thought. For example, Christ says in His second commandment: "love your neighbor as yourself (ὡς σεαυτόν)" (Mk. 12:31). There should be therefore a foundational self (αὐτός) as the source or factor shaping relations and making them possible. The relation (σχέσις) cannot be primary in the sense of beingness, although the relationality of a human hypostasis towards other hypostases is an essential element of its existence. Undoubtedly, every human hypostasis is relational in its self-activity and its specific existential presence: it is a person. The directional relationality is fundamental to its existence. Kallistos Ware highlights this fact effectively: "We need to see our personhood not only in its relationship to God, but also in its relationship to our fellow men. We come close to the heart of the human mystery when we affirm the double truth, I need God in order to be myself; and equally, I need you in order to be myself."[86]

By definition, however, the hypostasis does not have its existence from a relation or relations. The internal existential constitution of the hypostasis (both human and non-human) defines its ability to enter into existential interactions. In terms of both its being and its existence, it is before everything a πρᾶγμα αὐθύπαρκτον.[87] It is no accident that the Byzantine authorities emphasize the self-existence of the unique hypostasis, but this emphasis should be understood within the context of its in-essentialized status, as well as within the context of the actuality of the concretely in-hypostasized essence or nature.[88] That nature is not to be opposed to the person in an adversarial way should be emphasized even more sharply. Nature does not mean simply sameness, but also personal otherness, open to constant dialogical transformation. Between nature and person, neither is ontologically prior, above, nor a possessor of the other, precisely because neither really exists without the other even for a moment. If one adheres to describing the relation between nature and hypostasis, or person necessarily by the term "priority", then one should

86 K. Ware, The Unity of the Human Person according to the Greek Fathers, in: *Philosophical Theology and the Christian Tradition: Russian and Western Perspectives*, ed. D. Bradshaw, Washington 2012, 75.

87 Cf. the interpretation of the concept by Michael Psellus in his treatise Εἰς τὸ οὐσία πρᾶγμα αὐθύπαρκτον [On the Self-Existent Substance], in: *Michaelis Pselli Philosophica minora*, vol. 1, ed. J.M. Duffy, Stuttgart-Leipzig 1992, 22–28.

88 Cf. G. Kapriev, The Conceptual Apparatus of Maximus the Confessor and Contemporary Anthropology, in: *Maximus the Confessor as a European Philosopher*, eds. S. Mitralexis, G. Steiris, M. Podbielski, S. Lala, Eugene, Oregon 2017, 174–179.

rather talk about a co-priority on the ontological level.[89] One should take into account the fact that the structure of being, determined by the dichotomy of nature and hypostasis, has both an ontological and a phenomenological functional level. Their correspondence is established through the model of essential action.[90]

4 Relation and Synergy

The description of the hypostasis in its fullness presupposes its interpretation simultaneously through its internal and external relations (where the specificity of personhood is a particular case) and through self-existence, realized through essential and causal energies. This type of description enables, among other things, the avoidance of traditional problems in the assumption of the 'actantial' character of things, considering them as autonomous actors in their various interactions. In this context, it is crucially important that the hypostasis is potentially capable of receiving the existential energies of other natures. Hypostases not only manifest their natural energies but also incorporate external natural energies that become part of their own hypostatic existence. In this way, through their proper energies, different hypostases can penetrate each other or co-inhere in each other. This is the so-called perichoresis (περιχώρησις, interpenetration): the inter-communication and mutual energetic penetration of two or more natures together with their properties and energies. The term ἀντίδοσις ἰδιωμάτων (exchange of properties) expresses the fact that the properties of the two natures are not simply attributed to the hypostasis. There is a real exchange between natures and their properties. In this mutual penetration or co-inclusion, natures and hypostases both preserve their otherness. The single hypostasis is capable of receiving the actions of hypostases of different natures without becoming one with them and, based on this, of modifying its own causal and existential actions.

This conceptual apparatus was developed in detail in Christian philosophy in connection with the explanation of the relationship between the two natures in the composite hypostasis of Christ. The term περιχώρησις describes the mutual penetration or co-inherence of Christ's Divine and human natures

89 N. Loudovikos, *Analogical Identities: The Creation of the Christian Self. Beyond Spirituality and Mysticism in the Patrisitc Era*, Turnhout 2019, 311–312.

90 S. Markov, *Die metaphysische Synthese des Johannes von Damaskus. Historische Zusammenhänge und Strukturtransformationen*, Leiden–Boston 2015, 257.

together with all their properties and energies, preserving their otherness in their relationship, including their natural properties. Here great emphasis is placed on the Divine nature in the hypostatic union not absorbing the human nature but including it in a synergy (συνεργία), i.e. in co-action and co-activity.[91] The Byzantine tradition extends this understanding to all hypostases and natures, whether finite or infinite. In the 14th century, Gregory Palamas interprets the deification of humans as being analogous to the deification of Christ's humanity due to περιχώρησις within the hypostatic union. He insists that the God-blessed—the saints—are filled with divine natural energy and thus live the life of God Himself. The in-hypostasization of supernatural energies, i.e., of the existential energy of the divine nature, is the basis for their deification (θέωσις): it is participation in God Himself, not participation in His nature, but only in his extra-trinitarian manifestations, that is, His actions and energies.[92] This immediate existential knowledge of God is therefore called "experience" (πεῖρα). In deification, man rises "beyond" the existential limits of his nature. This cannot happen on the basis of natural human capacities because otherwise humans would be able to become gods by their own nature.[93] The deified human does not cease to be human by nature, but their natural energies are in synergy with the divine natural energies and introduce divinity into their existence.

The fact that the concept of περιχώρησις denotes the mutual penetration and co-inherence of two (or more) different natures (together with their respective properties and energies), while preserving their proper otherness, opens up the possibility of describing specific circumstances associated with the emergence of composite hypostases including or combining multiple sources of agency as well as circumstances associated with the inclusion of multiple non-homogeneous natures (for example, human and non-human, but also the radically different non-human natures of technological and non-technological artifacts) under the guidance of a seemingly single actant.[94] This perspective allows for the emancipation of objects and non-human beings from humans

91 Cf. Maximus Confessor, AmbTh, 5, in: PG 91, 1053B; Id., ThPol, 16, in: PG 91, 208AB; Id., Pyrrh., in: PG 91, 337CD.

92 Gregorius Palamas, Contra Akindynon, I, 6, *Γρηγορίου Παλαμά Συγγράμματα*, τομ. 3, επιμ. Π. Χρήστου, Θεσσαλονίκη 1970, 42, 6–10.

93 Gregorius Palamas, Triades, III, 1, 26, *Γρηγορίου Παλαμά Συγγράμματα*, τομ. 1, επιμ. Π, Χρήστου, Θεσσαλονίκη 1988, 638, 21–26.

94 S. Tanev, Actor-Network vs Activity Theory. Dealing With the Changing Nature of the Asymmetry in Human-Technology Inter-Actions, in: *Le sujet de l'acteur. An Anthropological Outlook on Actor-Network Theory*, eds. G. Kapriev, M. Roussel, I. Tchalakov, Paderborn 2014, 78.

and for treating them as fully fledged actors, while maintaining the aspect of asymmetry in their relations and the peculiarity of human and all other actors.[95]

5 Individual

The term "individual" (ἄτομον) has sparked vigorous debates in recent decades, especially among Eastern Orthodox theologians,[96] and has been interpreted in radically different ways. At one extreme, there is an insistence that ἄτομον fundamentally differs from hypostasis (ὑπόστασις) and person (πρόσωπον), because it "falls under the category of nature."[97] The other pole is formed by the complete identification of individual, hypostasis and person. It is claimed that, in the Fathers, there is an absolute identity between the concepts.[98] It seems to me that, at its core, this divergence mainly stems from the failure to distinguish between two classes of conceptual orders, sufficiently differentiated by Byzantine philosophers: the order opposing the universal and the particular, and the order juxtaposing the natural and the hypostatic.

The latter view can be supported by solid arguments. When discussing numerical difference as a characteristic introduced by the *logos* of the hypostasis of one nature, Gregory of Nyssa, for example, defines the numerical difference between hypostases as an effect of their idiosyncrasies.[99] When he speaks of hypostases circumscribed in a separate place, focusing on the hypostases of human nature,[100] he practically identifies them with the individuals of that nature. Gregory identifies (with respect to human exemplars—"Peter, Paul, Barnabas") the concepts of "hypostasis," "person," "single essence" (μερικὴ οὐσία), and "individual" with a clear criterion: they do not denote the common, but namely the single (μερική), the self-contained (ἰδική) essence.[101] Leontius of Byzantium also identifies the terms "person," "hypostasis," "individual," and

95 Cf. G. Kapriev, Actor-Network-Theory and Byzantine Philosophy, in: *Analogia: The Pemptousia Journal for Theological Studies*, 12–13 (2021), 65–67.

96 Cf. a brief summary of the discussions in M. Lysack, *Asceticism and the Eucharist*, London 2024, 124–125.

97 Cf. J. Zizioulas, Person and Nature in the Theology of St Maximus the Confessor, in: *Knowing the Purpose of Creation through the Ressurection*, ed. M. Vasiljevic, Alhambra 2013, 91.

98 Cf. N. Loudovikos, *Analogical Identities: The Creation of the Christian Self. Beyond Spirituality and Mysticism in the Patrisitc Era*, Turnhout 2019, 276, 312 and 319.

99 Gregorius Nyssenus, Ad Ablabium quod non sint tres dii, in: PG 45, 120B.

100 Ibid., in: PG 45, 132AD.

101 Gregorius Nyssenus, Ad graecos, ex communibus notionibus, in: PG 45, 177D.

"subject" (ὑποκείμενον) with each other when they are viewed in contrast to nature.[102] A tendency to affirm similarity between the concepts of "hypostasis," "person," and "individual" in the same context, with a tendency towards mutual identification, is also demonstrated by Maximus the Confessor. He defines nature as the type that multiplies in multiple bearers called hypostases and individuals, which, in terms of human nature, are equated with persons.[103] Here should be added the voice of John Damascene, especially authoritative with regard to these definitions. He states that, according to the holy Fathers, hypostasis, person, and individual are one and the same, namely that which, being peculiarly composed of essence and distinguishing properties (συμβεβηκότα), exists by itself, differs numerically, and exhibits something particular, for example, Peter, Paul, this horse.[104] And again, he categorically explains: every human, bull, angel is a hypostasis. Nature, form (μορφή), and essence are the commonality contained in such hypostases, while hypostasis, individual and person are each the singular (τὸ μερικόν) of the species (εἶδος) contained in them.[105]

When considering the presence of the common and the indescribable, the unlimited (ἀπερίγραπτον), i.e., nature or essence, in something singular, separate, "private," then the terms "individual," "hypostasis," and even "person" in the case of rational beings can be thought of as synonymous. Admitting this perspective as the only one not only leads to the unconditional assertion of the synonymy between "hypostasis" and "individual," reliant on the respective statements of John Damascene, but also draws attention to the fact that even the selected examples ("this man," "this horse") coincide with those provided by Aristotle to illustrate what essence is in a primary and unconditional sense—the so-called first essence.[106] This circumstance tempts a complete identification of the hypostasis containing the entire species-nature with the numerically particular nature. The hypostasis uneasily identified with the individual is conceived as a bundle of essence and hypostatic characterizing properties, which are thought of as universal accidents, uniquely combined.[107] But hypostatic properties cannot be reduced to "universal accidents," even if they are uniquely combined.

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102 Leontius Byzantinus, Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos, in: PG 86, 1305C.

103 Maximus Confessor, ThPol, 26, in: PG 91, 276A.

104 Johannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 43, in: ed. Kotter 1, 109, 10–14 (PG 94, 613B).

105 Johannes Damascenus, Institutio elementaris ad dogmata, in: PG 95, 101A.

106 Cat., 5, 2a11–14.

107 Cf. C. Erismann, A World of Hypostases: John of Damascus' Rethinking of Aristotle's Categorical Ontology, in: *Studia Patristica*, 50 (2011), 274 и 279–280.

The statement, however, can be attributed to the individual, conceived in the narrower sense of the term. Primarily, "individual" characterizes the differentiation in number among the singular representatives of a given species, although in this context the terms "hypostasis" and "person" are also added, insofar as they denote something or someone belonging to one essence.[108] The individual in its proper sense is also called by the name "hypostasis," insofar as the essence with its properties really exists in it.[109] By defining the concept of "hypostatic difference" (ὑποστατικὴ διαφορά), Maximus the Confessor correctly points out that the division of things having the same essence by number determines the multiplicity of individuals.[110] In this definition the concept of ἄτομον is regarded by him as a category of essence and a result of the subdivision of genus and species, that is, standing in the order of the natural, not the hypostatic. It is John Damascene who makes the significant stipulation that, in the same way the formative species distinctions are not called essential if they do not belong to a single essence, individuals are not called hypostases if they do not belong to a single essence.[111] Here the relationship is obviously not symmetrical: the hypostasis can in-hypostasize two or more essences. According to this determination, "individual" strictly denotes the singular representative of the species, which is defined as more general than the individual, precisely because it includes many individuals.[112] For this reason, in formulating the inseparable characteristic (ἀχώριστον συμβεβηκός), which does not belong to the stock of the essence, because it is not considered in the whole species, but is peculiar to the hypostasis and cannot be separated from it and therefore is determined as a characterizing property (χαρακτηριστικὸν ἰδιώμα), Damascene draws particular attention to the fact that the individual itself never differs according to such a property, precisely because it is not included in the definition of nature. One can be snub-nosed, but also not snub-nosed. And if one does not have blue eyes, one does not become less human.[113]

The individual in its proper sense is that which could in practice also be divided further, but after the division, it would depart from its initial definition. The human individual, for example, can be divided into soul and body, but neither of these "parts" is the complete human being and does not pre-

108 Cf. Johannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 5, in: ed. Kotter 1, 61, 60–62, 79 (PG 94, 541CD).
109 Johannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 42, in: ed. Kotter 1, 109, 21–23 (PG 94, 613A).
110 Maximus Confessor, ThPol, 14, in: PG 91, 152B.
111 Johannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 50, in: ed. Kotter, 118, 40–42 (PG 94, 632A).
112 Johannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 5, in: ed. Kotter 1, 62, 72–74 (PG 94, 541C).
113 Johannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 5, in: ed. Kotter 1, 63, 121–164, 139 (PG 94, 545AB).

serve the species "human."[114] In this context, uniqueness is procedurally taken out of brackets. When speaking strictly about individuals, one speaks from the perspective of the species, whose singular representatives they are. Here, "individual" is a term more associated with natural rather than hypostatic characteristics. It is the single particular being from the standpoint of its natural valence, valid for its species. Of course, this circumstance does not presuppose an ontological or axiological hiatus between the two dimensions, emphasized through "hypostasis" and "individual" from this perspective. Continuing Andrew Louth's thesis that the determinations of "hypostasis" in John Damascene circumscribe the place of hypostasis in a kind of topology of being,[115] it may be argued that the hypostasis and the individual have a place in different topological spaces, the intersecting zone of which has a very wide scope.

This problem field gains a special sharpness in anthropology. The radical juxtaposition between hypostasis, or person, and individual presupposes that "person" denotes human uniqueness, while the individual is conceived as the singular representation of nature or essence par excellence. The nature represented by the individual is nominated as the bearer of ontological necessity, which constrains and deprives freedom through its laws. It stands at the foundation of individualism and leads towards death. The individual is the zone of enclosure, egoism, isolation from others, of non-relationality. The individual, and therefore individuality, is seen as a kind of "breakdown," "collapse," or annihilation of the hypostasis. The person, on the other hand, is identified with freedom, including freedom from nature. It is not at all an expression of nature, but transcends nature and individuality, thus becoming a generator of community.[116]

This concept enters into direct confrontation with the Byzantine tradition, not only due to the identification of concepts in the field of singularity. It arises from the fact that the emphasis in distinguishing the individual from the hypostatic falls on natural properties. Precisely the properties of human nature, as formulated in tradition, are what most powerfully testify against the described conceptual scheme.

Gregory of Nyssa points out that the definition of man (ὁ ὅρος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) is not always considered in one and the same individual or person (οὐκ

114 Johannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 11, in: ed. Kotter 1, 81, 7–12 (PG 94, 573AB).

115 A. Louth, *St John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology*, Oxford 2002, 47.

116 Cf. J.D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion. Studies in Personhood and the Church*, New York 1997, 40–65.

ἀεὶ ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἀτόμοις ἤτοι προσώποις). Some die, and others come in their place, so that the definition is established sometimes in these, sometimes in others, at one time in more, other times in fewer, so that the determination of essence itself is influenced by the change and alteration of individuals and persons. For this reason we are obliged to recognize and account for some τρόπος of essence, following from their variation. This position does not in any way concern the persons and essence of the Trinity.[117] But these observations have only a "warning" character, as they draw attention to more or less externally varying circumstances. The view of the internal constitution of human nature is decisive.

As a first step into this problematic, it should be recalled that the nature present in created hypostases is not identical, but similar, as John Damascene stated programmatically.[118] This seriously questions the unqualified linking of nature with necessity in the strict sense of the word. In the same key, Gregory Palamas explains that unlike the hypostases of the Trinity, nature with its energy in creatures of one genus is similar, not identical. Both the natural identity in the Trinity and the natural similarity among human beings are related to the will as a structural element of nature.[119] The similarity is realized according to the peculiarities of the hypostases. But this circumstance does not presuppose an ecstatic transition from individual to hypostasis/person, which is conceived as a leap from necessity into freedom and grace, as an emergent entry into dialogue with the Godhead.

Photius of Constantinople opposes such imagined leaps. Why force you grace to serve nature, he asks, when grace has always been the ruler of nature. Grace is stronger than nature, but that is not decisive. We ourselves are also capable of standing above our nature; even passion, pain or youth and old age are stronger than it. But grace is what created nature, and it transforms nature into a better state.[120] Photius does not lose sight of the limits and insufficiency of human nature, but at the same time sees the immanent and primary relationship between it and grace. He shows their cooperation, compatibility, and mutual complementarity for the sake of man's eternal blessedness.[121] It is not

117 Gregorius Nyssenus, Ad graecos, ex communibus notionibus, in: PG 45, 180AB.

118 Johannes Damascenus, Institutio elementaris ad dogmata, 2, in: PG 95, 101A.

119 Gregorius Palamas, Capita 150, 112, in: *Γρηγορίου Παλαμά Συγγράμματα*, τομ. 5, επιμ. Π. Χρήστου, Θεσσαλονίκη 1992, 97, 1–25.

120 Photius, Homiliae, 1, in: PG 102, 552C–553C; Cf. Photius, Amphilochiae, 64; 167, in: PG 101, 425B; 860B–861A.

121 B. Schultze, Byzantinisch-patristische ostkirchliche Anthropologie (Photius und Johannes von Damaskus), in: *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 38 (1972), 193–194.

some additional action of grace that creates freedom, nor does it act in a way that cancels the freedom of the will.[122]

Gregory of Nyssa also speaks about freedom as a natural characteristic of man as the image of God.[123] Maximus the Confessor unequivocally declares: Man is an image of the divine nature, which is self-ruling—αὐτεξούσιος: freedom is an essential property. If the image truly preserves the likeness of the archetype, it is self-ruling, free by nature. Freedom is inherent in man by nature.[124] And again, just as categorically: neither in divine and uncreated nature nor in rational and created nature does anything exist that is subject to necessity, because that which is rational by nature possesses the natural capacity of desiring, which is namely called the will of the noetic soul.[125] Something cannot be an image of a self-ruling, independent nature, have in its nature a free and independent will, and simultaneously be naturally subject to necessity. Nature, and hence true freedom, presuppose communion with God in grace. Perfection is not achieved solely through divine grace but also requires free synergistic cooperation on the part of man.[126]

Man is free through and by his nature.[127] The tearing apart of the relations "individual-hypostasis" and "hypostasis-nature", conceiving nature or essence as the generator of a blind and non-relational necessity and a counterpoint of freedom, is contrary to the positions of the Byzantine thinkers. It ignores the decisive position that the human being exists and builds itself through analogy, syn-ergy with all other created beings and with God. A position placed at the center of anthropological vision and characteristic of the entire tradition—from Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor to Gregory Palamas and beyond.[128]

The differentiation between the concepts of "individual" on the one hand and "hypostasis" and "person" on the other is aimed at procedurally directing attention to the natural characteristics or the uniqueness of the singular being, without opposing them at an ontological level. Ultimately, uniqueness is poten-

122 Cf. Photius, Amphilochiae, 76, in: PG 101, 472AB.

123 Gregorius Nyssenus, De opificio hominis, 16, in: PG 44, 184B.

124 Maximus Confessor, Disputatio cum Pyrrho, in: PG 91, 324D.

125 Ibid., in: PG 91, 293B.

126 J. Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian thought*, Washington 1969, 92–93.

127 N. Loudovikos, *Analogical Identities: The Creation of the Christian Self. Beyond Spirituality and Mysticism in the Patrisitc Era*, Turnhout 2019, 311.

128 N. Loudovikos, *Analogical Identities: The Creation of the Christian Self. Beyond Spirituality and Mysticism in the Patrisitc Era*, Turnhout 2019, 256–258; К. Янакиев, *Метафизика на личността. Християнски перспективи*, София 2020 [K. Janakiev, *Metaphysics of the Person: Christian Perspectives*, Sofia 2020—Bulgarian], 203–235.

tially grounded in human nature and it cannot have its basis anywhere else. It is not coincidental that John Damascene argues that the discussion of the human individual reveals not the "what" but the "who" (οὐ τὸ τὶ δηλοῦν, ἀλλὰ τὸν τίνα).[129] The individual is not a "private nature," but a singularity presupposing uniqueness through the non-identical common nature presented in it—the human species. Carried out purely methodologically, the precise definition of "individual" excludes the rejection of a common nature (with the common *logos* for humanity) in favor of "private nature." The radical "ontological" polarization of "individual" and "hypostasis," or their complete identification are results of the reification of the method, which is at the bottom of every ideology. With the topic "nature-hypostasis-individual," in any case, we are already in the realm that primarily motivates every philosophy, including the Byzantine—the realm of anthropology.

129 Johannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 5, in: ed. Kotter 1, 64, 136–138 (PG 94, 545B).

CHAPTER 4

The Human Being

The human being, its nature, and the specificity of its hypostasis and personhood are at the center of Byzantine philosophy—both in themselves and from the perspective of Christology.

1 The *logos* of Man

With the opening sentence of his renowned work *De natura hominis* Nemesius of Emesa declares: man is perfectly composed of noetic soul and body (ἐκ ψυχῆς νοερᾶς καὶ σώματος), so well that it would not be possible for him to arise and exist otherwise.[1] Gregory of Nyssa, the forerunner of anthropology from the perspective of Christian philosophy, already stresses that through the Divine Word the entire human nature is created as one, which is precisely the image of God.[2] One human nature in its wholeness and fullness extends over the entire human genus (γένος)—from the first man to the last, while the differences within it, including the distinction between male and female, are later imparted to creation.[3]

Disruption of this perspective arises from the thesis of Leontius of Byzantium, which draws an analogy between the unity of the two natures in Christ and the unity of body and soul in man. Man, he insists, is composed of ontologically perfect parts in themselves. The soul is a "self-moving incorporeal essence" (οὐσία ἀσώματος αὐτοκίνητος), assuming that such a "self-moving essence" is also the body-σῶμα.[4] The soul and the body are two different natures, each with its own logos.[5] Yet they "encounter" each other in a hypostasis. Man is composed of soul and body in the hypostasis, defined as existing in and of itself (καθ' ἑαυτόν). Thanks to the *logos* of the hypostasis, soul and body enter into mutual relations and thanks to it they constitute a composite essence.[6] The hypostasis

1 Nemesius Emesenus, De natura hominis, 1, in: PG 40, 504A.
2 Gregorius Nyssenus, De opificio hominis, 22, in: PG 44, 204D.
3 Ibid., 16, in: PG 44, 185D. See in detail about the topic in J. Zachhuber, *Human nature in Gregory of Nyssa: philosophical background and theological significance*, Leiden–Boston 2014.
4 Leontius Byzantinus, Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos, in: PG 86, 1281B.
5 Ibid., in: PG 86, 1280B.
6 Ibid., in: PG 86, 1288D.

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makes possible the exchange of properties (ἀντίδοσις τῶν ἰδιωμάτων), peculiar to the soul and the body separately, which realize the one nature of man—human nature.[7] It is conceived through one common thought encompassing the whole: man is neither just soul nor just body.[8] The nature of the composite, present in the hypostasis and expressed through one concept, is not the same as the natures of the constituents.[9] Leontius's thesis that the unification of soul and body in a composite nature occurs only in the concrete human hypostasis is rejected by Maximus the Confessor.

Human godliness is the guiding axiom for Maximus too. Man is the image of God. Within it is set the *logos* of man,[10] that is, the word-λόγος of God about man (Gen. 1:27). The *logos* of human nature establishes being with soul and body and a nature consisting of a rational soul and body.[11] The whole man is the image of God. In themselves the soul and the body are two distinct, mutually independent essences. Both the soul and the body have their own principles of essence and their own modes of existence. In and of themselves, they are not identical in essence and remain different in their genesis and being. This circumstance explains the possibility of their separation for a certain period (from the death of the earthly man to the resurrection of the dead).[12]

At the same time they are in inseparable connectedness in man: they are the indivisible components of the one psycho-somatic human nature. Their principal togetherness is laid down in the divine plan, including the determination of the one composite nature, whose foundation is its one *logos*, which preexists in the will of God. The unified structure of human nature is constituted in the one species (εἶδος). Maximus undermines and rejects two variants of the hypothesis, characteristic of Platonism and Origenism, that soul and body are not only two principally distinct natures, but are also supposed to dwell in man as two separate substances.[13]

On the one hand, he attacks the opinion that bodies were invented as punishment for the transgression of preexisting minds-νόες. Evil is not to be understood as the cause of visible creation. He also exposes the ensuing conclusion that a necessary action imposed on Him from outside, resulting from the delict of minds, is attributed to God. God, Maximus insists, has everything that has

7 Ibid., in: PG 86, 1289CD.
8 Ibid., in: PG 86, 1293CD.
9 Leontius Byzantinus, Solutio argumentorum Severi, in: PG 86bis, 1925C.
10 ThPol, 1, in: PG 91, 37BC.
11 Ambigua ad Ioannem (AmbIo), 42, in: PG 91, 1341D.
12 AmbIo, 42, in: PG 91, 1321BD.
13 AmbIo, 42, in: PG 91, 1321D–1324B.

existed, exists, and will exist, both in essence and in being, in His plan for all eons, in order to introduce it into existence and being at the right and appropriate moment (καιρός). From this perspective, Maximus again emphasizes that the existence and nature of contingent beings do not coincide with the divine *logoi*.[14] The *logos* of human nature is a natural and divine law.[15] The parts of this whole complex nature cannot have separate existence: they can be distinguished only in thought.[16]

Composite human nature possesses its unified species. In it, the human essence has being and existence as a common essence for all humans, including the natural characteristics (τὰ φυσικὰ ἰδιώματα, τὰ γνωρίσματα), corporeality, animality, sensuality, rationality, and the corresponding natural energy, to which Maximus also attributes the will, which is proper only to rational beings.[17] The unity of soul and body in man is not only hypostatic, but also natural.[18] They are necessarily related to each other and are equally necessary for the constitution of the species.[19] Furthermore, in order to fulfill its existential task, which requires achieving integrity of existence, man must unite the parts of his nature (body, sensibility, reason and mind, conceived of as "extremes" of the human) in mutual "appropriation" (οἰκείωσις).[20] Thus formed, human essence is valid for all humans together, and for each individual human being.

The *logos* corresponds to the mode of existence of human nature. This mode of existence is the order (τάξις) of natural activity. It is the order of natural action and the endurance of impacts, which changes and rearranges itself several times, without human nature changing in any way.[21] Human nature's mode of existence immediately after the creation of man is replaced by another, which includes decay and changeability. The corresponding empirical consti-

14 AmbIo, 42, in: PG 91, 1325D–1328B.

15 Pater, in: PG 90, 901D.

16 AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1100C.

17 Pyrrh., in: PG 91, 295AC, 300CD, 305A. Cf. J.-C. Larchet, *La divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris 1996, 125–126; P. Piret, *Le Christ et la Trinité selon Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris 1983, 200, 386; В.В. Петров, *Максим Исповедник: онтология и метод в византийской философии VII века*, Москва 2007 [V.V. Petrov, *Maximus the Confessor: Ontology and Method in 7th Century Byzantine Philosophy*, Moscow 2007—Russian], 14, 76, 106–107.

18 Ep., 12, in: PG 91, 488D, 552D–553C; AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1101AD; AmbIo, 42, in: PG 91, 1324C, 1341D. Cf. L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator. The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, Lund 1965, 103–104; 111; 124; 127.

19 AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1101CD; AmbIo, 42, in: PG 91, 1324AB.

20 AmbIo, 42, in: PG 91, 1312AB.

21 AmbIo, 42, in: PG 91, 1341D.

tution of human existence is a result of sin. The work of the Savior, on the other hand, opens the way to a new, genuinely divine *tropos* of human nature, in which the incarnate God has renewed the mode of existence of this nature, but not its *logos*.[22] In all cases of change in the *tropos*, no innovation and no change of the *logos* is meant. Each of them abides in a specific mode of existence of this nature.[23]

Maximus emphasizes that the two natures, the soul and the body, are related to each other according to their being. It is not only about their relatedness within one species, but also about the relationship of each concrete soul with its concrete body, as species and nature are not self-existing but always exist in a hypostasis. This connection is preserved even after physical death, which violently separates the body and the soul. After the death of the body, the soul is referred to not simply as "soul," but as the soul of the concrete man (τοῦ τινος ἀνθρώπου ψυχή). Conversely, the mortal body, even if it has decomposed into its constituent elements, does not lose its genetic connection with the soul. It remains the body of the concrete man (τοῦ τινος ἀνθρώπου σῶμα).[24] The soul and the body maintain their "necessary relation" with and thanks to their hypostasis. They dwell forever in this relation, established in divine *logoi*: both in the *logos* of human nature and in the *logos* of hypostasis.[25]

Indeed, physical death separates the two essences, concretely united in the hypostasis of man. But they maintain their connection even after it (the soul of the particular body with the body of the same soul)—until and after the Judgment. After the resurrection of the dead, the body—asserts Maximus categorically—returns to the soul, and the souls of the righteous are received by God, who is the true life.[26] Just as the perishable has swallowed up the flesh because of sin, and the flesh the soul, so in the hour of resurrection, through a gracious transposition into the holy Spirit thanks to the incarnation of God, the flesh will be swallowed up by the soul into the Spirit, and the soul by God.[27]

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22 Pyrrh., in: PG 91, 320C.

23 AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1097AD. Cf. V. Karayiannis, *Maxime le Confesseur: essence et énergies de Dieu*, Paris 1993, 206; А.И. Брилліантов, *Влияние восточного богословия на западное в произведениях Іоанна Скота Эригены*, С.-Петербург 1898 [A.I. Brilliantov, *The Influence of Eastern Theology on the West in the Works of John Scottus Eriugena*, St. Petersburg 1898—Russian], 211–212, 329.

24 AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1101BC.

25 Cf. G. Benevich, *John Philoponus* and *Maximus* the *Confessor* at the *Crossroads* of *Philosophical* and *Theological Thought* in *Late Antiquity*, in: *Scrinum*, 7–8/1 (2011–2012), 102–130.

26 Maximus Confessor, AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1100CD.

27 AmbIo, 21, in: PG 91, 1252A.

In this context, the main thesis, formulated by Gregory of Nyssa, states that the elements of the corporeal are not in themselves material, they are incorporeal and indestructible. Due to their connection in earthly life, a certain relationship is formed between the soul and the elements of the body. It puts its stamp on them, which is the inner shape, *eidos* or form of the body. The specific bodily organization of the concrete man remains preserved despite all the transience of the material. For its part, it imprints its characteristic on the soul.[28] After physical death, the immortal soul is among all the elements of its body with its "positive power." They separate from each other, but are not destroyed. At the resurrection of the dead, with each soul, those elements from the common mass of matter that were united with it beforehand will be reunited, except for those added through the deviation of human nature from its natural state. It is not contradictory, therefore, that, at the resurrection of the dead, the elements of the body, whose composition bears the imprint of the specific human being, will be received by the soul of that being and placed in the spirit. Still Paul actually says that the "psychic body" which is "sown," cast as a seed, will rise as a "spiritual body": Σπείρεται σῶμα ψυχικόν, ἐγείρεται σῶμα πνευματικόν–1 Corinthians 15, 44. After the separation of the soul and the body following physical death, the soul also remains in relation to the elements of its concrete body. This relation follows their kinship, their growing together (συμφυία), and their common activity in the course of the earthly life. In the resurrection, which is a transformation into incorruption and immortality, bodies will not have organs and parts related to the needs of earthly life. The bodily elements and all bodily characteristics will be transformed into the "spiritual body" of man.[29] The psychosomatic unity of man does not disintegrate at any single moment.[30]

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28 Gregorius Nyssenus, De opificio hominis, 24, in: PG 44, 212D–213C.

29 Gregorius Nyssenus, De opificio hominis, 27, in: PG 44, 225B–228D. Cf. Gregorius Nyssenus, *De anima* et resurrectione, in: PG 46, 44C–48C и 76A–80A.

30 Cf. А.И. Брилліантов, *Влияние восточного богословия на западное в произведениях Іоанна Скота Эригены*, С.-Петербург 1898 [A.I. Brilliantov, *The Influence of Eastern Theology on the West in the Works of John Scottus Eriugena*, St. Petersburg 1898—Russian], 189–190; Г.В. Флоровский, *Восточн?е отц? IV века*, Париж 1931 (*repr* Москва 1992), 156–183; H. Beck, *Vorsehung und Vorherbestimmung in der theologischen Literatur der Byzantiner*, Roma 1937, 211 и 240; V. Lossky, *Essay sur la théologie mystique de l'Église d'Orient*, Paris 1944, 99; Ф.С. Владимирский, *Отношение космологических и антропологических воззрений Немезия к патристической литературе и влияние его на последующих писателей*, в: Немезий Эмеский, *О природе человека*, Москва 1998 [F.S. Wladimirsky, The Relationship of Nemesius's Cosmological and Anthropological Views to Patristic Literature and Their Influence on Later Writers, in: Nemesius of Emesa, *On the Nature of Man*, Moscow 1998—Russian], 297–298.

John Damascene seemingly revisits ideas from Leontius of Byzantium, resulting in further refinement of the conceptual framework. Through his sharp rejection of the identification of nature and hypostasis, Damascene problematizes the notion of a single human nature. The argument is built upon the distinct determination of the soul and the body, which are two natures with incompatible properties. Nevertheless, the human hypostases, all of them consisting of soul and body, are considered as in-hypostasizing a single human nature, although each hypostasis possesses both natures of the soul and the body. The complex nature of humans, John explains, is designated as one because all human hypostases are reduced to one species and are defined by one definition. All human hypostases share the common species because they participate in the nature of the soul and the essence of the body. Although it is said that human nature is one, it is not said that an individual human being has one nature. Each single human being is not called a being with a unified nature, because every human hypostasis consists of two natures, preserving them within itself undividedly, proven by their separation at death.[31]

The soul is created together with the body, not before it, as Origen imagines. It unites with the body, whole with whole, not part with part, and it contains the body, not vice versa, just as fire encompasses iron.[32] The hypostasis, which is existence in itself, maintains the two complete natures with their specific differences and their unadmixed properties. Once united hypostatically, they remain indivisible from each other forever. Although death separates the soul from the body, their hypostasis remains one and the same. Therefore, the soul and the body maintain their hypostatic connection regardless of circumstances, including their separation before Judgment Day.[33]

"Man" is defined as "nature" in the most general sense of the word and is considered as a kind of "living being," distinguishing him, for example, from a "horse." Peter or John are spoken of as individual humans, as each of them includes the common species of human nature in himself.[34] They correspond to the common *logos* of that nature. However, the words "nature" and "essence" refer not to some unified essential quality, as in the case of the soul and the

31 Johannes Damascenus, Dialecitca, 41, in: *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, Bd. 1, ed. B. Kotter, Berlin–New York 1969 (ed. Kotter 1), 107, 16–108, 26 (PG 94, 609A–612A); Expositio fidei, III, 3, in: *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, Bd. 2, ed. B. Kotter, Berlin–New York 1973 (ed. Kotter 2), 112, 39–113, 49 (PG 94, 992AB).

32 Expositio fidei, I, 13; II, 12, in: ed. Kotter 2, 39, 39–41; 76, 22–23 (PG 94, 853A; 921A).

33 Dialectica, 66, in: ed. Kotter 1, 139, 5–24 (PG 94, 665B–668A).

34 Dialectica, 44, in: ed. Kotter 1, 109, 2–110, 22 (PG 94, 616A–617A). Cf. K. Rozemond, *La christologie de saint Jean Damascène*, Ettal 1959, 21.

body separately, which retain their natural properties even after their union: opposites in essence do not belong to one nature. These words are used concerning "man" to denote what is similar in all humans and is not represented to a greater or lesser extent in different individuals. All humans have the same structure composed of soul and body, and realize both natures. For this reason, they are subsumed under one definition. "Nature" and "essence" denote the composition of soul and body, which every human inevitably possesses (ἀμεταβλήτους ἔχων ἐν ἑαυτῷ). One speaks about "human nature" in another sense too, as one says about every complex object, that it consists of the components which directly make up its composition. For example, a house is not said to consist of earth and water but of bricks and beams. Otherwise, one would have to argue that a human consists of five natures: the four elements and the soul. In the same way, with Christ, the parts that compose Him are not considered, but only divinity and humanity.[35] In the case of humans, one cannot talk about a truly composite (σύνθετος) nature that transforms and changes its constituent components, for the body is incomparably different from the four elements, just as the mule retains neither the nature of the horse nor the nature of the donkey. This does not apply to "human nature."[36]

2 Image of God, Microcosm and Ancestral Sin

Kallistos Ware draws attention to the fact that quite a few earlier authors associate the image of God in man with the soul and not with the body, and, within the soul, with the power of self-awareness, of conscious thought and of reason. Nevertheless, this view is not the only one. In the same period, a minority, albeit a highly authoritative minority, maintains that the divine image embraces not just the soul but the total human being, body, soul and spirit together. Irenaeus of Lyons, for example, proclaims that the whole man, not part of man, was created as the image of God; the soul and the spirit, however, are a part of man but not man as such. The same emphasis can be found in Michael Choniates' work at the end of the 12th century: the concept of man does not refer to the soul or the body separately—the whole man is the image of God. Building on this tradition, Gregory Palamas and the hesychasts of the 14th century were convinced that the divine light pertains to the entire hypostasis of the saint—body, soul,

35 Expositio fidei, III, 16, in: ed. Kotter 2, 153, 16–155, 50 (PG 94, 1064C–1068A).
36 Cf. Dialectica, 66, in: ed. Kotter 1, 140, 39–45 (PG 94, 669AB).

and spirit together. The glory of Tabor is perceived by the whole man and fills him entirely.[37]

Gregory of Nyssa lays down the determining horizon of anthropological speculation by defining man primarily as the image of God. Man is the image of God by his nature, regardless of the division into male and female, which has no relation to the divine archetype. Gregory discovers human godliness chiefly in the mind (νοῦς), the center of human essence, in rationality (τὸ λογικόν), in the capacity for reflection and foresight (τοῦ διανοεῖσθαι καὶ προβουλεύειν δύναμις), and in freedom. Yet he does not neglect the other marks of godliness in man, including in his physicality, which shape the essential dignity and greatness of humanity (τὸ ανθρώπινον μέγεθος). Only from the perspective of human godliness does Gregory find meaning in the recognition of man as a microcosm. He considers the pagan view of human greatness, defining him as a μικρὸς κόσμος, as inadequate and unworthy, because it consists of all the elements from which the universe is composed. Such reverence for human nature does not recognize that it ultimately accords with reverence for mosquitoes or mice, for which the same should be claimed. The search for the dignity of man as the image and likeness of the transient and mutable world is unworthy. Only from the perspective of the divine likeness of man and his fulfillment with all goods can the intermediary place between extremes be appreciated: between divine and incorporeal nature and irrational and animal life. Through this position he holds all genres of life and is a conduit for divine actions in every creature and a mediator for the return of the whole of creation to unity with the One.[38] By virtue of his mixed or dual nature, man can act as a mediator, in a way that angels cannot.[39]

Nemesius of Emesa's arguments are also in this vein. Discussing the dignity of human nature, he emphasizes the notion that man is created in the image and likeness of God. Because of man, everything exists: both the present and the future. Even God became man because of him. By nature this creature bears

37 K. Ware, The Unity of the Human Person according to the Greek Fathers, in: *Philosophical Theology and the Christian Tradition: Russian and Western Perspectives*, ed. D. Bradshaw, Washington 2012, 69.

38 Gregorius Nyssenus, De opificio hominis, 16, in: PG 44, 177D–185D. Cf. T. Kobusch, Bild und Gleichnis Gottes. Elemente menschlicher Freiheit, in: *Mots médiévaux offerts à Ruedi Imbach* (Textes et Études du Moyen Age 57), eds. I. Atucha, D. Calma, C. König-Pralong, I. Zavattero, Porto 2011, 143–151.

39 K. Ware, The Unity of the Human Person according to the Greek Fathers, in: *Philosophical Theology and the Christian Tradition: Russian and Western Perspectives*, ed. D. Bradshaw, Washington 2012, 73.

within itself the image of the whole of creation. For this reason it is also called a microcosm (μικρὸς κόσμος), honored by divine providence.[40] John Damascene also explains that God created man as some kind of second cosmos, a small one inside the big one (οἷόν κόσμον δεύτερον, ἐν μεγάλῳ μικρόν).[41]

The concept of man as a microcosm, understood in this sense, persists in Byzantine tradition. Many Byzantine thinkers, however, reframe the Hellenic idea of man as a microcosm, reversing the relationship. Gregory of Nazianzus even speaks of man as a "second cosmos." Yet, with his noetic soul and as the image of God, he is a great cosmos inside the small one—ἐν μικρῷ μέγας.[42] The universe existing within the human hypostasis is incomparably larger than the physical universe with its planets and stars. The human being is not a *mikrokosmos* but a *megalokosmos*.[43] The line drawn by Gregory the Theologian finds its continuation in this tradition. It is noted that Simeon the New Theologian and Nicetas Stethatos place a particularly strong emphasis on man as a "great world" within the "small." The role of man, the image of God, as mediator between God and the created world is emphasized. The presence of the dimension of the psychic, noetic and spiritual that distinguishes man from the "small, visible world" is crucial. In parallel with the influence of Gregory the Theologian, the contribution of Maximus the Confessor is essential here.[44]

Maximus the Confessor draws attention to the fact that the material nature of man includes the nature of the entire cosmos within itself. He presents man as a "comprehensive workshop" (συνεκτικώτατον ἐργαστήριον) in which all created natures are actively represented. Man and his being hold a special position and have a universal task. Man is the middle (μεσότης) between created being and the natural connection (σύνδεσμος) of all creatures. He is created to mediate between the components of his own nature, having to synthesize the "extremes" of both his own nature and the whole of creation, as well as

40 Nemesius Emesenus, De natura hominis, 1, in: PG 40, 532C–536A.

41 Johannes Damascenus, Expositio fidei, 26, in: *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, Bd. 2, ed. B. Kotter, Berlin–New York 1973, 76, 25–26 (PG 94, De fide orthodoxa, II, 12, 921A).

42 Gregorius Nazianzenus, Oratio 38, in: PG 36, 321D–324A.

43 K. Ware, The Unity of the Human Person according to the Greek Fathers, in: *Philosophical Theology and the Christian Tradition: Russian and Western Perspectives*, ed. D. Bradshaw, Washington 2012, 72.

44 Cf. И. Алфеев, *Преподобный Симеон Новый Богослов и православное Предание*, Москва ^{7}2017, 250 [H. Alfeev, *St Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition*, Moscow ^{7}2017—Russian]; Н. Ким, Великий в малом или малый в великом. Человек и мир в христианстве [N. Kim, *The Great in the Small or the Small in the Great: Humanity and the World in Christianity*—Russian], in: http://onkim.orthodoxia.org/stati/velikij-v-malom-ili-malyj-v-velikom-chelovek-i-mir-v-xristianstve/, viewed on 04.01.2023.

to resolve contraries.[45] He has to manage contingent creation and bear immediate responsibility for it. He is responsible both for apostasy from the state established by God and for the return of creation to God. Created natures will participate in God through man and in man.

The cosmos encompasses bodies and is encompassed by the nature of bodies. The cosmos and the body mutually penetrate each other. By its nature, the human being is the all-encompassing active summary of the cosmos. The different cognitive faculties of the soul and the body connect and coordinate all parts of creation (both material and noetic). Discussing the cognitive sphere, Maximus asserts that man is limited by the cosmos, but the cosmos is also limited and defined by man, by his perceptual capacity. Man's task is to achieve holiness. Through the strength of his love for God, he must reveal the divine through his natural constitution, ennoble bodies and the cosmos, bring them closer to God, prepare them for their return to God, and therefore for their deification within man.[46] The eschatological task of man is to contribute to the divinization of all created natures, insofar as their λόγοι are present in their origin and destiny, i.e., in the one Λόγος. Their deification is interpreted as their optimal accordance with their essential norms, with their λόγοι. The divinization of the psychosomatic unity of man is the engine and guarantee for the return of the entire creation to God and the participation of all created natures in God, the path to which is revealed following the renewing salvific work of Jesus Christ.

The relationship between human nature and the fall of man, according to the Eastern Orthodox tradition, is already to be inferred by the fact that it does not speak of an original sin, but of an ancestral sin, of προπατορικὸν ἁμάρτημα. The sin of Adam and Eve is considered to be their personal sin. It cannot be a matter of inherited guilt or "sin of nature," although human nature bears the consequences of Adam's sin. It has not changed the nature of man. It has darkened the image of God, but not deformed it. The ontological drama of man has made human nature not sinful, but sick. Among the diseases of mankind inherited through birth, decay (φθορά) and death are the foundation of all others. However, death has never been desired by God, and it is not a contradiction that God will give humans and their nature eternal life and free them from death.[47]

45 AmbIo, 41, in: PG 91, 1305AB; AmbTh, praef., in: PG 91, 1032B.

46 AmbIo, 10; 26, in: PG 91, 113CD; 1153AB.

47 Cf. Ἰ. Σ. Ρωμανίδης, *Το* Προπατορικὸν Ἁμάρτημα, Θεσσαλονίκη ^{3}2010, 156–161; J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology. Historical Trends & Doctrinal Themes*, London–Oxford 1975, 143–146; К. Янакиев, *Метафизика на личността. Християнски перспективи*, София 2020, 248–260.

The authors sharply distance themselves from the positions of Roman theology to a greater or lesser extent. Indeed, it should be noted that no one fully aligns with Photius of Constantinople who, in his commentary on the objections of Theodore from Antioch, bishop of Mopsuestia, opposes them, claiming that human beings sin by nature and not by volitional disposition (γνώμη), thereby targeting the teachings of the Westerners. What is meant is the doctrine that human nature became different after the misconduct of Adam and Eve, so that sin now has its place in nature and not in free volitional decision (προαίρεσις). Consequently, newborn children must have some kind of nature formed by sin. They must inherently possess sin. Photius described the doctrine he criticizes as a heresy and absurdity. In the case of Christ's incarnation, he claims, it is not a question of a different nature, but only of a different figure (σχήμα) of nature. Baptism bestows the renewal that is imminent after the resurrection of bodies in all reality.[48] The thesis concerning the God-image of man, human nature unviolated by sin, remains generally valid. John Damascene emphasizes that God created man sinless by nature but free by will: incapable of sinning by nature, but not so by free decision.[49] John explains in advance that the expression "according to the image" discloses the mind and free will (τὸ νοερὸν δηλοῖ καὶ αὐτεξούσιον), while "according to the likeness" expresses a likening to God through virtue with regard to what is appropriate to human power (τὸ δυνατόν).[50]

Maximus the Confessor is paradigmatic on this topic, drawing a fundamental distinction between the creation of man at his inception (γένεσις), when Adam was created, and birth (γέννησις), through which the human race multiplies after Adam's fall. The first man is γενητός and his descendant is γεννητός. The act of creation places the divine λόγος of human nature with the corresponding τρόπος of existence. Birth determines the mode of existence of nature, through which the effects of sin, primarily decay and passion, are transmitted to subsequent generations.

In this context Andrew Louth hits on a crucial point: The fall does not exist on the level of the *logos*, but of the *tropos*. The consequence of the fall is not that nature itself is deformed, but that it is misused. In a fallen world, the λόγοι remain untouched by anything natural, but natures can act in ways (τρόποι) contrary to their fundamental λόγοι. The λόγοι are obscured by the τρόποι that natures adopt. The fact that the fall does not affect the level of nature does not

48 Photius, Bibliotheca, 177, in: PG 103, 513A–516A.

49 Johannes Damascenus, Expositio fidei, II, 12, in: ed. Kotter 2, 77, 37–41 (PG 94, 924A).

50 Expositio fidei, II, 12, in: ed. Kotter 2, 76, 16–21 (PG 94, 920B).

mean that the effects of the fall are superficial.[51] Neither sin nor decay (death) became part of human nature even after the fall, observes Basil Lourié, interpreting Maximus the Confessor. Mortality is inherited by the human species, but not because it has become a part of nature.[52]

The distinction between the logos of the creation of man (τῆς ἀνθρώπου γένεσεως λόγος) and the *tropos* of birth occasioned by sin (τῆς γεννήσεως αὐτοῦ δία τήν ἁμαρτίαν τρόπος) lies in the fact that the *logos* of creation stands at the foundation of human nature and remains eternally enduring and unchanged. From the perspective of cause (κατ' αἰτίαν), it is the very creation of man. Conversely, the *tropos* of birth is merely a mode of existence of nature imparted to man for pedagogical economy. It has its end after the correction of man and his complete return to the principle of his creation. This *tropos* is transient and incapable of harming the *logos* of nature according to the measure of its creation.[53]

The salvific work of Christ restores the *tropos* of economy to the logos. The incarnate God sanctifies birth itself, thereby compensating for the hiatus between the coming into being and the birth of man.[54] The God-man initiates changing laws contrary to the logos of nature and the return to harmony with the principle of nature.[55] He has nevertheless renewed (ἐκαινοτόμησε) not the *logos*, but the mode of existence of human nature: He imparts a new *tropos* of its existence.[56] This *tropos* is based on the potential set into the *logos*, on the essential powers of human nature.[57] In both cases, it concerns the laws of one and the same human nature.

The whole is brought into proper order (ἀναῤῥυθμίζεται).[58] However, this is not about any kind of circular return to the initial state of created man, a restoration of Adams' original state. It does not imply any Origenistic return to the beginning. The Neoplatonic scheme of *exitus-reditus*, which presupposes a cyclical movement and the respective return to the starting point from which

51 A. Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, London–New York 1996, 56.

52 В.М. Лурье, *История византийской философии. Формативный период*, Санкт-Петербург 2006 [B.M. Lourié, *The History of Byzantine Philosophy: The Formative Period*, St. Petersburg 2006—Russian], 397.

53 Cf. Maximus Confessor, Quaestiones ad Thalassium (Thal), 21, in: PG 90, 312B–313; AmbIo, 42, in: PG 91, 1316C–1320A, 1325C; Opuscula theologica et polemica (ThPol), 4, in: PG 91, 60C.

54 AmbIo, 42, in: PG 91, 1325B.

55 AmbIo, 31, in: PG 91, 1276CD.

56 Pyrrh., in: PG 91, 320C.

57 AmbIo, 31, in: PG 91, 1280AC.

58 AmbIo, 31, in: PG 91, 1276D.

the next similar cycle must begin, is essentially repudiated. According to Maximus and all Christian thinkers since the Cappadocians, regardless of the extent of Neoplatonist influence on them, the completion of the return and the starting point do not coincide. It surpasses it; its level is a higher one. A new repetition of the cycle of being is impossible.[59]

3 The Psychosomatic Unity of the Human Being

Even in the pre-Byzantine era, it is customary for Eastern Christian authors to consider man as an indissoluble unity of body and soul. This avoids undervaluing the body in favor of some form of "pneumatism" or "psychism." These principles find confirmation throughout the Byzantine tradition: they can be traced from the anthropological theses of Gregory of Nyssa to George Scholarius.

Man created in the image of God encompasses the fullness of humanity, Gregory of Nyssa insists. Every human being has within itself the fullness of the whole nature characteristic of the entire human species.[60] Any differentiation is secondary to this unified nature. For him, this also means that man is simultaneously soul and body. They are not possible without each other. In one of his theological reflections, Emperor Justinian postulates: "At the same time, God creates the body and creates the soul of man, forming the complete man in this way; for the body without the soul is not a man, as well as the soul without the body."[61] The topic is treated in particular detail by Maximus the Confessor.

He reminds us that the soul and the body have their own *logoi* and ways of origination: they differ in being, possess entirely different essential definitions, and have their own modes of existence. However, this does not negate the fact that they are indivisible from each other, simultaneously created components of the one psycho-somatic nature of man, having their own *logos* in God's eternal plan.[62] The *logos*, the divine principle of human nature, is a single natural and divine law.[63] The connection between soul and body is constitutive of the human species. Soul and body cannot be described as actual "parts" of the

59 Cf. G. Kapriev, Das Problem der Erbsünde in der Anthropologie des Maximus Confessor, in: "Inherited sin?" Erbsünde?, eds. T. Hainthaler, F. Mali, G. Emmenegger, A. Morozov, Insbruck–Wien 2024, 457–476.

60 Gregorius Nyssenus, De opificio hominis, 16; 22, in: PG 44, 185D; 204D.

61 Iustinianus, Epistula ad Menam, in: PG 86, 953A.

62 Cf. AmbIo, 21; 42, in: PG 91, 1249BC; 1321B–1324D.

63 Pater, in: PG 90, 901D.

human being. They cannot have a separate existence and can be distinguished only mentally.[64]

The soul and the body are inherently related to each other in their being. This not only concerns their species-relatedness, but also the relation of every concrete soul with its concrete body. The species and nature are not self-existent but always exist in a singular human being.[65] In this context, it should be noted that psychology itself has no independent place in Maximus's thought. The human being is not interpreted solely as a soul and the soul is not seen as an autonomous entity.

Reflecting on the unity of soul and body in the one *logos* of man, Maximus emphasizes that the body is in no way assigned to the soul as a punishment, but their connection is natural and primary. As already mentioned, he vigorously defends this assertion against the thesis of Leontius of Byzantium, with his unequivocal analogy between the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ and the body-soul unity of man.

Indeed, Maximus points out that the leading nature in this unity is the soul. When he speaks of the "royal image" (βασιλικὴ εἰκόνα) of the soul, he is not attempting to instill any contempt for the body. It simply indicates the fact that the soul animates the body: it gives it life and its perfections. It is precisely the soul that can—through the spirit and the intellect—make the body wise, enabling it to overcome "carnal thinking" and its corresponding representations. Philosophers following the paradigm of Byzantine philosophy adhere to this fundamental anthropological position across the spectrum of intellectual attitudes.

4 The Human Body

According to the framework definition, the body (σῶμα) possesses three dimensions, namely length, width, and depth or thickness (πάχος). All bodies are composed of the four elements (στοιχεία), and the bodies of living beings—also of the four humors (χυμοί): black bile (μέλαινα χολή), phlegm (φλέγμα), blood (αἷμα), and yellow bile (ξαντὴ χολή).[66] The reflections of Nemesius of Emesa in the chapter dedicated to the living body also revolve around this basis, emphasizing the analogy between the elements and the humors considered as

64 AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1100C.

65 AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1101BC.

66 Johannes Damascenus, Expositio fidei, 11, 12, in: ed. Kotter 2, 78, 58–67 (PG 94, 925AB).

a mixture of the four elements.[67] Michael Psellus adds weight and lightness as other basic characteristics of bodies.[68] This framework schema is only the starting point for reflections on the human body.

4.1 *The Body in the Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*

Maximus the Confessor insists that the body is a participant in life according to the logos of humanity and in human unity with God. True knowledge of God and the experience of the divine necessarily involve bodily experience.[69] When he speaks of the body passing into the soul, the soul into the mind-νοῦς, and the mind into God, this does not mean the body departs from its nature. It is not a question of a merging of "lower" states of being into "higher" ones. Natures remain unchanged.[70] Bodies, created by the will, reason-Logos, and wisdom of God, are unquestionably good. Moreover, being an integral part of humanity, they are created for an eternal existence: they cannot fall into non-being.[71] At the same time, Maximus often speaks of the "law of the flesh" with undoubtedly negative pathos and with a view to overcoming it. Does the abolition of this law mean rejection of the flesh?

Instructive in this context is firstly his assertion that the fall results in psychosomatic changes, including in the composition of the human body. It is a fundamental part of human nature and cannot remain unaffected by the change in the way it exists. The main point here is that conflicting and mutually destructive properties become present in corporeality. In their antagonism, they invariably annul the immutability and immortality of the body that were characteristic of the way in which human nature existed before. The flesh of the fallen human remains flesh as it was created by God. But this flesh is now much "heavier"; it is mortal and internally contradictory. The death of the body is defined as a punishment. However, it is not the body that is punished for sinfulness, but the whole man, who has sinned through the soul and its irrational movement. God chooses death for the body, which abstracted from the soul is nothing, to make it evident that sin is a loving orientation towards nothingness, preferred over God. The character of the flesh structured this way in this mode of existence (and not the flesh itself or the body) can and must be overcome by the

67 Nemesius Emesenus, De natura hominis, 4, in: PG 40, 608B–612C.

68 Michael Psellus, De omnifaria doctrina, 92, in: *Michael Psellus. De omnifaria doctrina*, ed. L.G. Westerink, Utrecht 1948 (ed. Westerink), 53, 1–11.

69 AmbIo, 38, in: PG 91, 1300C.

70 AmbIo, 10, in: PG 91, 1113B.

71 AmbIo, 42, in: PG 91, 1332AB.

return of the human to God[72] The abolition of these new laws begins with the salvific work of Christ, in which God supernaturally makes use of the nature in the natural of humans.[73] In any case, this ἀνομαλία is subject to elimination or overcoming under the guidance of righteous reason that prefers virtue above all else.[74]

Examining the postlapsarian existence of human nature, Maximus makes an appeal for the "mortification of the bodily members." However, here he does not literally mean the killing of the body, but rather the passionate sensory perceptions and the subsequent movements of reason and intellect. From this perspective, he speaks of "carnal thinking" (φρόνημα τῆς σαρκός), which must be suppressed and rejected. It concerns the love for the sensory that usurps love for God. The flesh, engulfed by passion and opposed to the spirit, introduces a new law of nature, the "law of human nature according to the flesh." It negatively alters the "law of nature" established by its *logos*, and is valid in the way it exists in this world.[75] This "law of the flesh," also called the "law of irrationality" (νόμος τῆς ἀλογίας),[76] is established by passion-filled corporeality and its corresponding chaotic movements, which are in correspondence with the autonomized and favored body. Conversely, by following the correct inner-anthropological order, it is possible to transcend the body and the corporeal without nullifying, ignoring, or undervaluing them.[77]

Maximus does not at all perceive passions as fundamentally belonging to the body or as originating from it. It is seized by them, but the grasp of passion is equally applicable to reason and intellect-νοῦς. However, the body is directly linked to sensibility, so passion for the corporeal enters primarily through it. What Maximus is by no means advocating is an isolation of the senses or a distancing from them. According to him, they stand at the beginning of rational knowledge, which is for him an exclusive and unquestionable value. What he insists on is their binding with right reason and the mind-νοῦς, through which the deforming effects of man's natural duality are to be compensated for.[78]

According to Maximus' view, the universe is a place of transition through matter into the territories of spirit, through the temporal into the infinity of life in God. Any longing for God that does not engage with the senses and the

72 AmbIo, 7; 45, in: PG 91, 1092D–1093A; 1352B–1353B.
73 AmbIo, 31, in: PG 91, 1280AC.
74 AmbIo, 8, in: PG 91, 1105B.
75 AmbIo, 10, in: PG 91, 1144B.
76 AmbIo, 31, in: PG 91, 1276C.
77 Cf. AmbIo, 29, in: PG 91, 1157D–1160A.
78 AmbIo, 43, in: PG 91, 1193BD.

material world has no reality in the soul: it can only be some kind of phantom. Just as God descended to humanity through the flesh, so the ascent of humanity to God does not presuppose the rejection of the material or the corporeal, but instead requires a transition through them: not rejection of the world, but understanding its true nature and its determinacy.[79]

In addition, he points out that the soul of the human being is manifested outwardly through the body and its actions.[80] Furthermore, he insists that the highest good attainable in this life—living the life of God, filled with His natural energies—is bestowed upon humanity precisely as a unity of soul and body, the whole psycho-physical human being. This already different way of existence is not only given "in the flesh," but is also expressed through the flesh because virtues are manifested outwardly through the body.[81] Virtue, liberation from the inherent nature of the perishable body and the perishable world, is expressed through the body and the world. The intellect-νοῦς rules the body, and the body, becoming passionless through the intellect, becomes an instrument of this very intellect. This body is a performer and servant of divine noetic and rational movements.[82]

4.2 *The Body and Icon Worship*

This dimension of corporeality gains exceptional significance through the arguments of the iconophiles in the course of the iconoclastic disputes. The Body of the Lord is also God, as John of Damascus emphasizes. Through the hypostatic union, the body has irreversibly become that which anoints (τὸ χρίσαν), remaining such as it is by nature, that is, animate flesh.[83] Israel did not see God, he continues, but we see the glory of the Lord unveiled,[84] which becomes possible precisely thanks to the deified body. Any kind of image of the immaterial, invisible, shapeless, and colorless Divinity is rejected as a lie. However, now that Divinity, as a life-giving and salvific anointment, has united with our nature, our nature has been glorified.[85] This glorification is conceived as an internal possession of the natural energy of Divinity by the bodily human. In

79 N. Constas, Introduction, in: *Maximos the Confessor, On Difficulties in the Church Fathers. The Ambigua*, vol. I, Cambridge Mass.–London 2014, XVIII.

80 AmbIo, 10, in: PG 91, 1108BD.

81 AmbIo, 10, in: PG 91, 1124C.

82 Cf. AmbIo, 10, in: PG 91, 1108B–1109A.

83 Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes, I, 16, in: *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, Bd. 3, ed. B. Kotter, Berlin–New York 1975 (ed. Kotter 3), 89, 9–14 (PG 94, 1245B).

84 Oratio I, 16, in: ed. Kotter 3, 92, 89–91 (PG 94, 1248B).

85 Oratio II, 11, in: ed. Kotter 3, 99, 72–100, 85 (PG 94, 1293D).

and of itself, the flesh is material and creation. I venerate matter, adds John of Damascus, through which my salvation was achieved. I venerate it not as God, but as filled with divine energy and grace (θείας ἐνεργείας καὶ χάριτος ἔμπλεων).[86] In this perspective, he introduces the initially Platonic concept of participation: I depict the invisible God, who became flesh and blood for our sake in participation (ἐν μεθέξει).[87] The participation of Divinity in the humanity of Christ is interpreted not as a causal effect, but as an energetic mutual penetration (περιχώρησις) while maintaining these natures with their respective principles and natural properties.

The body also plays a decisive role in the argumentation of Theodore the Studite.[88] It is a property of Divinity to be indescribable, incorporeal, and without form, he reasons, and a property of humanity to be describable, tangible, and three-dimensional. Christ must be both indescribable and describable. The describable (περιγραπτόν) is human essence. Rejecting describability through body and mind qualifies as blasphemy, because it denies the human nature of Christ.[89] In the case of Christ, the coexistence of the indescribable (the divine) and the describable (the human) is constantly emphasized. According to Theodore, insisting on total indescribability is to blend the natures of Christ[90] and, at the same time, eliminate His humanity, because those who have the same properties have the same nature.[91] If every image is a depiction of form (μορφή), shape (σχῆμα), appearance (εἶδος), and color, then such are inherent to Christ.[92] The limitation of the corporeal and the visible, thanks to which it becomes articulate and describable, is crucial for Theodore's argumentation.

If someone is depicted in any way, it is possible because he is embodied, because he is ἐνσώματος.[93] He is, however, not represented as soulless. The same applies for Christ and His Divinity in the image of His historical figure. Where, asks Theodore rhetorically, is the Divinity not present? Is it not in the rational and irrational, in the animate and inanimate? However, it is there to a greater

86 Oratio II, 14, in: ed. Kotter 3, 105, 17–20 (PG 94, 1300B).
87 Oratio III, 6, in: ed. Kotter 3, 78, 79–81 (PG 94, 1325B).
88 In his Ἀντιρρητικοὶ κατὰ τῶν εἰκονομάχων.
89 Antirrheticus III, 1, 3, PG 99, 392B.
90 Antirrheticus III, 1, 43, PG 99, 409B; cf. Antirrheticus II, 1, 43, PG 99, 409B.
91 Antirrheticus III, 1, 10, PG 99, 393C: "If Christ is supposed to be uncircumscribable not only with respect to his divinity but also with respect to his humanity, then his humanity is actually divinity, because those things that have the same characteristics also have the same nature."
92 Antirrheticus III, 1, 11, PG 99, 393D.
93 Antirrheticus III, 1, 40, PG 99, 408D.

or lesser extent, depending on the configuration (κατὰ ἀναλογίας) of the respective natures. The Divinity is in the image, but not through natural unity, because it is not some kind of flesh worshipped on its own, but worshipped through relative participation (σχετικὴ μετάληψις), to the extent that it participates in grace and honor.[94]

4.3 *The Body in the Teaching of Gregory Palamas*

Gregory Palamas places great emphasis on the significance of the body in his teaching. In his radical opposition to the Manichaean and Origenist theses, he not only categorically rejects the idea of the body as the source of evil, but he assigns it a primary role. The body makes man a human being and determines his particular condition. There is no evil in the body, because it is not evil in itself. Palamas even asserts that the material and mortal body is more devoted to God and closer to Him than the darkened soul. Evil cannot come from the body as a body, because evil is a product of a malevolent mind and its somatic representations and thoughts.[95]

These become possible in human nature's present problematic way of existence and the existential disposition of man in it, where an obsession with the "carnal" can be observed. This contrasts with rational love for the body, which is in accordance with human nature and its natural determination. Only on the basis of the fragmented reality of post-lapsarian human existence is it necessary to speak of antinomies between "mind" and "body" or between "rational" and "carnal." The mode of existence κατὰ φύσιν does not allow for such divisions.[96] Ultimately, for Palamas, the mind is as distant from God as the body. Their natural energies are of the same order. They are not actually in contradiction. The fundamental ontological boundary is not formulated through the duality of "material-noetic" but through "created-uncreated."

While noetic and rational nature (νοερὰ καὶ λογικὴ φύσις), such as the nature of angels and human souls, has life essentially, the souls of irrational beings, animating their bodies, have life not essentially, but solely as energy and relation. It depends on another essence. Because it is only effect, this soul dies

94 Antirrheticus I, 12, PG 99, 344AC. Cf. Г. Каприев, Аристотелистката аргументация в *Антиритики срещу иконоборците* на Теодор Студит и при Иоан Дамаскин, в: *Християнство и култура*, 3 (2017) [G. Kapriev, Aristotelian Argumentation in the Anti-Iconoclast Antirrhetica of Theodore Studite and in John Damascene, in: *Christianity and Culture*, 3 (2017)—Bulgarian], 49–61.

95 Gregorius Palamas, Triades, I, 3, 38, in: Id., *Συγγράμματα*, ed. P. Christou, I, 448, 27–29.

96 D. Harper, Becoming Homotheos: St. Gregory Palamas' Eschatology of Body, in: *The Triune God*, ed. C. Athanasopoulos, Newcastle 2015, 241.

together with its cessation.[97] Both the nature of the angels and the nature of man possess the three basic existential and cognitive powers: *nous*, knowledge, love, which in this context is identified with the spirit. The difference is that angels do not possess the life-giving spirit (ζωοποιὸν πνεῦμα) because they have not been given an earthly body from God to animate and sustain through this power. Only the human soul, created in correlation with the body, receives the spirit from God in this way.

The difference between angels and humans lies in the fact that the human rational and noetic soul has life not only as essence but also as energy. Through this energy, it vivifies the body coexisting with it (ζωοποιεῖ γὰρ καὶ τὸ συνημμένον σῶμα), according to which life is expressed rightfully for it as well. The difference between the body and the soul from this point of view is precisely that the animate body (ἔμψυχος σῶμα) has life only as energy and has it thanks to the energy of the soul, while the soul has it both as energy and as essence. Through the life-giving spirit, also defined as noetic eros (νοερός ἔρως), the soul naturally possesses loving connection with its own body, which it never wishes to abandon.[98]

The body with its nature is the cosmic part of man, representing the common ontological basis with all other living bodily beings. The human soul united with the body functions as a differentiating ontological principle. It not only realizes the human species in each hypostasis but also differentiates man from all other living and non-living beings in the entire created cosmos.[99] The nature of the human soul is created in the image of God by God Himself to a higher extent compared to the bodiless angels, Gregory Palamas insists.[100] This high dignity is not even tarnished by the fall. The triadic nature of man stands immediately after the highest Trinity.[101]

When Palamas speaks of two types of human knowledge of God—that achieved through natural cognitive abilities and that given through divine natural energies—he speaks of two heterogeneous cognitive spheres with a clear subordination between them. However, human unity requires such a meeting place where the experience gained from knowledge in both spheres can be col-

97 Gregorius Palamas, Capita 150, 30–31, in: Id., *Συγγράμματα*, ed. P. Christou, vol. 5, Thessalonike 1992, 51, 10–52, 2.

98 Palamas, Capita 150, 37–38, ed. Christou v, 55, 22–56, 25.

99 R. Guerra, Potency of God. Hypostaticity and Living Being in Gregory Palamas, in: *Mustard Seeds in the Public Square: between and beyond Theology, Philosophy, and Society*, ed. S. Mitralexis, Wilmington, Deleware 2017, 253.

100 Palamas, Capita 150, 39, ed. Christou v, 56, 26–57, 18.

101 Palamas, Capita 150, 39, ed. Christou v, 56, 26–28.

lected, coordinated, and can act together. This core of the wholeness is the intelligent human body. It is the point where every energy is held and from which it radiates: both natural vital and cognitive energy, as well as supernatural energy, provided it is inherent to the respective hypostasis.

The human body (along with the psychosomatic integrity of man) actively perceives and assimilates the activities/energies originating from other beings, both human and non-human. Once assimilated, these energies enter into synergy with the energies in the human body, and again, the body is what manifests them outwardly. Similarly, human energies enter into synergy with human and non-human hypostases that perceive them. Emphasizing the body as the primary recipient of life-giving spirit and noetic eros underscores human wholeness, which is only as such capable of being the recipient of divine life *par excellence*.

When discussing the differences between angelic and human nature, Palamas emphasizes that it is precisely through the body that God has bestowed upon man, and only upon man, all cognitive forms: noetic, rational, and sensory (where sensory experience is exclusively inherent to the body). Sensory capability is by nature connected with the rational and begets the diverse array of arts, sciences, and knowledge that God has bestowed only upon man.[102] Moreover, in connection with the triadic form (τὸ τριαδικόν) of knowledge, Palamas observes that it is only to man that God has ordained the expression through his body (with the strength of his faith) of the presence and revelation of the higher Logos in the flesh, in which angels do not participate.[103]

From this perspective, the basis for Palamas' regarding the heart (καρδία) as the center of psycho-somatic human unity, rather than the mind (νοῦς), becomes clear.[104] The heart is defined as the "first fleshly rational organ" (πρῶτον σαρκικὸν ὄργανον λογιστικόν).[105] Our soul, he explains, is a living and acting entity, possessing multiple powers (πολυδύναμον πρᾶγμα), one of which is the νοῦς. The heart is the inner container (μεσμεσαίτατος ὄχμα) of all the natural and supernatural energies of man. It is described as a governing organ (ἡγεμονικὸν ὄργανον) and the throne of graceful gifts (τῆς χάριτος θρόνος), where the mind and all rational thoughts of the soul are stored (ὁ νοῦς καὶ πάντες οἱ λογισμοὶ τῆς ψυχῆς).[106] Gregory Palamas relates every existential gesture to the life of the body, which has a structurally formative role. Its being sets out the perspec-

102 Palamas, Capita 150, 63, ed. Christou V, 71, 24–32.
103 Palamas, Capita 150, 30; 32; 63, ed. Christou V, 51, 10–20; 52, 3–7; 71, 24–72, 7.
104 Palamas, Triades, II, 2, 9, ed. Christou I, 514, 20–515, 11.
105 Palamas, Triades, II, 2, 27, ed. Christou I, 534, 4–5.
106 Palamas, Triades, I, 2, 3, ed. Christou I, 395, 17–396, 22.

tive of continuity. Just as it is equally filled by divine and spiritual energies, it also guarantees convergence between discursive and non-discursive cognitive contents.[107]

Therefore, Palamas emphasizes that those delving into ἡσυχία must constantly return and enclose their mind within the body, especially within the innermost body of the body (ἐπανάγειν καὶ ἐμπερικλείειν τῷ σώματι τὸν νοῦ, καὶ μάλιστα ἐν τῷ σώματι ἐνδοτάτῳ σώματι), known as the heart.[108] Thanks to the heart, the body is the unquestionable possessor, coordinator and mediator of every experience, whether natural or supernatural, which is expressed precisely through it. It constitutes the decisive locus of humanity in being.[109]

The opinion that the human body is the bearer of chaos and disorder in the world, that evil and sin originate from it, and that it is even its cause, contradicts not only the teachings of Maximus the Confessor and Gregory Palamas, but also the defining element of positions within the Byzantine philosophical tradition. A symptomatic example in this context is Michael Psellus. In the pseudo-didactic work *De omnifaria doctrina*, he refuses to view humans as composed of two in-hypostasized natures remaining essentially distinct, as is the case in the Incarnation of the Word of God. The soul and the body are different essences, existing in human hypostases, but neither does the soul precede the body, nor does the body precede it; they subsist in indivisible interaction (συνάλληλα ὑφέστηκεν). Human hypostases are in essential unity (οὐσιώδης ἕνοσις), gathering into one essence (εἰς μίαν οὐσίαν συνάγουσα) and in the principle-λόγος of humanity.[110] Describing nature as the origin of the principle of movement and rest that is the invisible to the eyes but apprehensible by the mind-νοῦς, Psellus asserts that it is implanted into bodies by God. Bodies are composed of the elements and have their movement and rest from God through nature. Bodies are propelled by multiple motors: primarily by God, then by the mind and the soul, ultimately by nature as an instrument of God. While inanimate bodies are moved solely by nature, humans and irrational living beings are moved both by the soul and by nature.[111]

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107 S. Markov, *Die metaphysische Synthese des Johannes von Damaskus. Historische Zusammenhänge und Strukturtransformationen*, Leiden–Boston 2015, 350, 352 and 363.

108 Palamas, Triades, II, 2, 16, ed. Christou I, 524, 9–12.

109 Cf. G. Kapriev, The body as coordinator of natural and supernatural energies in human beings in Maximus the Confessor and Gregory Palamas, in: *The Wedding Feast*, ed. P. Ladouceur, Montreal 2010, 103–112. Cf. A. Chouliaras, The Role of the Human Body in Hesychast Theology: Some Remarks, in: *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai Theologia Orthodoxa*, 2 (2022), 271–289.

110 Michael Psellus, De omnifaria doctrina, 4–8, in: *Michael Psellus. De omnifaria doctrina*, ed. L.G. Westerink, Utrecht 1948 (ed. Westerink), 15–20. Cf. Ibid, 58–60, ed. Westerink, 40–41.

111 Michael Psellus, De omnifaria doctrina, 57, ed. Westerink, 40.

A common position is that the body is created according to divine wisdom. It has its divine principle-*logos* and is therefore unquestionably good in itself. The "law of human nature according to the flesh" is introduced with the act of the fall and has validity in the present mode of existence, without violating the primary and unchanging *logos* of essence—both of the body and of human nature. Even in this mode of existence, however, corporeality itself is not subject to rejection, but "the carnal thinking," which the autonomized and favored body is capable of developing. The soul and the body cannot be reduced one to the other. But they are indivisible components of the one psychosomatic nature of man. The connection between soul and body is constitutive for the human species. It concerns not only species-relatedness but also the relationship of each particular soul to its specific body. According to the logic of *perichoresis*, the soul manifests itself outside the human through the body and its actions, wherein the psycho-somatic unity of the human does not disintegrate for a moment. Even after the separation of the soul from the body due to bodily death, the soul remains connected to the elements of its concrete body. After the resurrection of the dead, the body returns to its soul and the souls of the righteous are accepted by God. The body is the decisive foundation of man in being. Underestimating it would signify not merely underestimating humanity but deleting it.

5 The Soul

5.1 *Gregory of Nyssa on the Soul*

Gregory of Nyssa dedicates his work *De opificio hominis* (Περὶ κατασκευῆς ἀνθρώπου) to his younger brother Peter, stating directly that with it he is supplementing their brother Basil's *Hexaemeron* with anthropological observations.[112] Gregory primarily identifies the godliness of man in reason and thought (λόγος καὶ διάνοια). Reason and thought are an imitation (μίμημα) of the truly divine *Nous* and Logos, wherein Divinity is described directly as Mind and Reason.[113] From this perspective, he asserts that there is a power (δύναμις) within us, namely, the indwelling νοῦς, which penetrates every instrument of sense (αἰσθητήριον) and encompasses all that exists.[114]

Indeed, Grigory demonstrates a willingness to discuss the tripartite nature of the soul (rather than, for example, three coexisting souls with distinct bound-

112 De opificio hominis, praef., in: PG 44, 125C.
113 Ibid., 5, in: PG 44, 137BC.
114 Ibid., 6, in: PG 44, 140A.

aries).[115] In all three διαφοραί, he insists, the powers of life and the soul are revealed. First and foremost, he mentions the vegetative and nutritive powers (αὐξητική καὶ θρεπτικὴ), which he calls "physical." These powers are observed in their pure form in plants because a vital power that does not participate in sensuality is discernible in them. There is, he continues, another type of life, to which the first belongs, which is capable of being directed by sensuality. It is represented in the nature of irrational living beings. These not only grow and feed but also possess αἰσθητικὴ ἐνέργεια τε καὶ ἀντίληψις (sense activity and sensation). Perfected life in a body, which feeds and perceives but also participates in reason and is governed by intellect-νοῦς, is recognized in rational, i.e., human, nature.[116]

Gregory tends to refer to the human "soul" in the essential sense only as the rational part of the soul, while the others are called by the same name in a kind of homonymy. The perfection of the human soul lies in the noetic and rational. The soul is not truly different from them but merely life activity (ἐνέργεια ζωτικὴ), to which the name "soul" is attributed. The action of the *nous* not only transcends the material but is also evenly distributed throughout all parts of man and permeates them.[117] The powers of the soul, different from intellect and reason, are added to man because of his affinity with lower nature.[118]

5.2 *John Damascene*

In solidarity with the definitions of Maximus the Confessor,[119] John Damascene describes the soul as a living, simple, incorporeal essence, invisible by its nature to bodily eyes, rational and intellectual (λογικὴ τε καὶ νοερά), shapeless (ἀσχημάτος), serving itself with an organic body to which it provides both life and growth, sensibility, and procreative ability, possessing an intellect (νοῦς) indistinguishable from it as the purest part of it (just as the eye is in the body). It is free, willing, and acting (αὐτεξούσιος, θελητική τε καὶ ἐνεργητική), yet mutable, i.e., having a variable will because it is also a creation.[120]

Furthermore, he points out that the powers of the soul are divided into rational (λογικόν) and irrational (ἄλογον) parts. The irrational part is divided into two: one is subject to reason, and the other is not. To the second sub-part belong

115 Ibid., 14, in: PG 44, 176AB.
116 Ibid., 8, in: PG 44, 144D–145A.
117 Ibid., 15, in: PG 44, 176D–177B.
118 Ibid., 30, in: PG 44, 256B.
119 AmbIo, 10, in: PG 91, 1196C–1197D.
120 Johannes Damascenus, Expositio fidei, 11, 12, in: ed. Kotter 2, 44–52 (PG 94, 924B–925A).

vital power (τὸ ζωτικόν), the reproductive part (τὸ σπερματικόν), i.e. the generating power (τὸ φυτικόν), which is also called nourishing power (τὸ θρεπτικόν). The latter includes the life power (τὸ ζωτικόν), the generative power (τὸ σπερματικόν), i.e., the procreative ability (τὸ φυτικόν), which is also called the nutritive (τὸ θρεπτικόν). These powers are not directed by reason but naturally (φύσει). Powers of the irrational part of the soul, subject to reason, are desire (ἐπιθυμία) and passion (θυμός). This is why they are called sentient (παθητικόν) and desiring (ὀρετικόν).[121] In the same chapter, he categorizes the powers of living beings into psychic, vegetative, and vital (ψυχικαί, φυσικαί, ζωτικαί). The vegetative and vital powers do not depend on the action of the will; they are ἀπροαίρετοι. The psychic powers are those that move according to volition (κατὰ προαίρεσιν): motion according to internal impulse (καθ' ὁρμὴν) and sensation (αἰσθήσις). The former includes abilities for spatial movement, for the propulsion of the entire body, for sound production, and for breathing, as it is up to us to put them into action.[122]

The irrational faculties of the soul are rarely addressed as a separate topic within Byzantine philosophy. In general, they are considered against the backdrop of the rational and noetic faculties of the soul, which themselves are subjects of philosophical analysis that are not often isolated. The main reason for this is that this tradition does not develop psychology as a specialized area but rather deals with psychological issues within the framework of the psychosomatic unity of man. Many key formulations become understandable only from this perspective. Nevertheless, some model teachings on mental faculties, including irrational ones, were formulated relatively early in history, forming the intellectual background of Byzantine thinkers.

5.3 *Nemesius of Emesa on the Non-rational Powers of the Soul*

Nemesius, attested as bishop of Emesa around 400, was heavily influenced by the Cappadocians, especially by Gregory of Nyssa. His work *De natura hominis* gained importance as the Byzantine "textbook on anthropology." It significantly influenced figures such as Maximus the Confessor and John Damascene.

Nemesius critiques numerous Hellenic doctrines on man. At the same time, he selectively appropriates positions and schemas of theirs that seem compatible with his stance. According to him, the soul is a bodiless immortal essence.[123] In the second chapter of his work, he rejects all Hellenic defini-

121 Ibid., in: ed. Kotter 2, 79, 94–80, 104 (PG 94, 928BC).

122 Ibid., in: PG 94, 929A.

123 Nemesius Emesenus, De natura hominis, 2, in: PG 40, 590AC.

tions of the soul and formulates the first Christian definition of the soul. It is argued that through Nemesius, Christian philosophy receives explicit self-assertion. Regarding Aristotle, Nemesius extensively criticizes his definition of the soul as entelechy and the identification of the life power of the soul as the soul in general. He notes that Aristotle separates the rational power from the soul. Thus, according to Nemesius, Aristotle deduces from one, and indeed the weakest, part of the soul, a conclusion that should apply to the entire soul.[124] However, this does not prevent Nemesius from following Aristotle's doctrine of the division of the soul.

He insists, however, that the *nous* is a part of the soul and not simply participating in it,[125] and introduces as a matter of course the thesis that the soul stands higher than the body because the latter is moved by the soul like an instrument (ὄργανον).[126] This circumstance does not question psychosomatic unity. According to Nemesius, man exists at the border between the noetic and sentient beings. With the body and its bodily powers, he is akin to the mindless animals and even to inanimate creatures, while through his rational ability (λογικόν) he is connected to incorporeal beings. The Creator has brought together different natures to make creation one.[127] In the soul thus formed, irrationality (ἀλογία) is represented with its parts, desire (ὄρεξις) and affect (θυμός), which serve the rational part.[128]

In chapter 15, entitled 'Another Division of the Soul', Nemesius introduces another list of powers, types, or parts of the soul. Now they are three: vegetative (τὸ φυτικόν, also called nutritive—θρεπτικόν—or excitatory—παθητικόν), sensory (τὸ αἰσθητικόν), and rational (τὸ λογικόν). Nemesius also calls them "instruments" (ὄργανα).[129] In the same place, he sets forth a brief description of the views of Senon and Panetius, and outlines Aristotle's division of the soul "in the physical writings," basically in *De anima*.[130] There, in addition to the intellectual capacity (τὸ διανοητικόν), attention is directed to four additional parts: the capacity for growth, sensory capacity, the capacity for spatial movement (τὸ κινητικόν κατὰ τόπον), and the capacity for desire (τὸ ὀρεκτικόν). Then he focuses on the general division of the soul's faculties into rational and irrational powers undertaken in Aristotelian ethics,[131] the latter being further subdivided into

124 Ibid., 2, in: PG 40, 560B–569A.
125 Ibid., 1, in: PG 40, 504A.
126 Ibid., 1, in: PG 40, 505B.
127 Ibid., 1, in: PG 40, 508A.
128 Ibid., 1, in: PG 40, 529B.
129 Ibid., 15, in: PG 40, 668C–669A.
130 Aristoteles, De anima, II, 3, 414a41–43.
131 Ethica Nicomachea, I, 13, 1102a26–1103a7. Cf. ibid., I, 6, 1098a1–9.

"obeying reason" (τὸ ἐπιπειθές λόγω) and "not subject to reason" (τὸ μὴ κατῆκοον λόγω),[132] which Aristotle also discusses in *De anima*.[133]

It is worth noting that after the detailed description of the parts of the soul from the perspective of Aristotle's scheme, during the discussion of the will (in chapter 26), another division of the faculties belonging to the living being is proposed, which approaches more closely to the position of Gregory of Nyssa. Here the faculties are divided into psychic, natural and vital. The psychic ones are related to free will, while the others are not. There are two psychic ones: movement by internal impulse (καθ' ὁρμήν κίνησις) and sensation (αἰσθήσις). The natural and vital forces, which do not depend on us and exist independently of our will, are the natural powers (nourishing, growing and procreating) and the vital power—the pulse-propelling faculty.[134] The difference lies in separating the psychic from the natural and vital powers.

Already Gregory of Nyssa, following the teachings of Galen, occasionally calls certain bodily organs (ὄργανα) instruments (not subjects) of the powers of the soul. This tendency is systematically and forcefully introduced by Nemesius. The only significant addition to Aristotle in our context is precisely the Galenic identification of the organs of psychic faculties, which—it should not be forgotten—are themselves defined as instruments of the soul. In harmony with the postulates of medicine at the time, which are compatible with the psychosomatic definition of man, he identifies the liver as the organ of the desiring faculty, and the heart as the organ of the exciting faculty.[135] He remarks thereby that in people living in accordance with nature, these parts are subject to reason and come into operation at its command. In animals, however, they are constitutive elements of their essence because without them, life would become impossible.[136]

As components of the soul not subject to reason, Nemesius mentions the nutritive capacity (θρεπτικόν), the reproductive capacity (γεννητικόν), and the pulsating capacity (σφυγμικόν). The nutritive and reproductive capacities are defined as "physical" (φυσικόν), while the pulsating capacity is termed "vital" (ζωτικόν).[137] The generative or spermatic power (τὸ σπερματικόν) is also a faculty that does not obey reason. The desire for copulation (συνουσία) is natural because we are inclined toward it not by the strength of our will but by nature.

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132 Nemesius Emesenus, De natura hominis, 15, in: PG 40, 669A–672A.

133 De anima, III, 9, 432a27–432b6.

134 Nemesius Emesenus, De natura hominis, 26, in: PG 40, 704B–705A.

135 Ibid., 16, in: PG 40, 672B.

136 Ibid., 16, in: PG 40, 672B–673A.

137 Ibid., 22, in: PG 40, 693A.

However, its exercise depends on us. The organs of generative power are the veins and the arteries.[138]

Veins, arteries and nerves are the three origins (ἀρχαί) governing living being. The nerve originates in the main brain, which is the origin of movement and sensory perception. From the liver, which is the origin of blood and the nutritive capacity, the vein emerges. From the heart, the origin of vital power, the artery emerges, which is the conduit of so-called πνεῦμα. These organs and their derivatives are in constant interaction.[139]

The pulsating movement (σφυγμικὴ κίνησις) is called vital power (ζωτικὴ δύναμις). It has its origin (ἀρχή) in the heart, specifically in the left ventricle (κοιλία), called "pneumatic" (πνευματική). It distributes innate and life-generating heat to all parts of the body. From the heart, through the arteries, life-generating pneuma (ζωτικὸν πνεῦμα) is dispersed throughout the body.[140] Nemesius speaks of various πνεύματα (spirits). Alongside ζωτικὸν πνεῦμα, he mentions the πνεῦμα φυσικόν, situated in the liver, πνεῦμα ψυχικόν and πνεῦμα νοερόν. Psychic pneuma, together with the anterior ventricles of the brain and the sensory organ apparatus, is counted among the organs of the imagination.[141] Intellectual spirit, πνεῦμα νοερόν, also initially present in the brain, is directed from the ἡγεμονικόν to the sensory organs. There are indeed five but, Nemesius stresses, sensation (αἴσθησις), also called the organ of sensitivity (αἰσθητήριον), is in fact a single one, which is psychic, and recognizes changes in their state through the senses.[142] The nature of these πνεύματα, which are at the foundation of the operation and actual existence of mental faculties, is basically physiological. In their structure, they are most closely related to the incorporeal soul.

5.4 *Further Tradition. Meletius the Monk*

As already mentioned, the irrational parts of the soul are not an independent topic in later Byzantine philosophy. Their discussion occurs more within the realm of medicine. This is the case with the monk Meletius, who worked in the 9th century. His work, published under the title *De natura hominis*, which is actually called *On the Bodily Edification of Man* (Περὶ τῆς ἀνθρώπου κατασκευῆς), is an apt example. Meletius primarily assigns the entire problematic (human nature, soul, and body in their mutual relationship) to medicine. He cites Hip-

138 Ibid., 25, in: PG 40, 700A.
139 Ibid., 24, in: PG 40, 697B.
140 Ibid., 24, in: PG 40, 697A.
141 Ibid., 6, in: PG 40, 633B.
142 Ibid., 6, in: PG 40, 637A et 636A.

pocrates and Galen as his main sources, followed only afterwards by the holy fathers and teachers of the church Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria and the "many others" who wrote wisely on these issues.[143] However, it is insisted that his work is largely a transcript from the summary (ἐπιτομή) of Leo the Mathematician (c. 790–c. 870) regarding human nature in his medical collection.

According to Meletius, the soul is interwoven (συνυφαίνεται) with the body. It sets it in motion—as its instrument. It gives it life and keeps it together (ζωογονοῦσα καὶ συγκρατοῦσα). The soul itself is incorporeal, rational, noetic, and immortal essence.[144] However, he further concentrates on physiology, wherein he discusses in detail the organs and systems forming the body in connection with the various fluids and elements. In a rational being, he says in the preface, three kinds of powers are at work: psychic, physical, and vital (ψυχικαί, φυσικαί, ζωτικαί). They are described as hegemonic, sensory, and motive respectively. Psychic powers include imagination, rational capacities, memory, meaning, thinking, and those set in motion by the senses and will. The vital forces are the capacity for breathing and the pulsating power. The physical powers include the reproductive capacity, nutritive capacity, and the capacity for growth. Philosophers do not go much further than this elementary primer.[145]

5.5 *The Rational Soul*

Nemesius of Emesa continues his description of the various dimensions of the soul with the imaginative faculty (τὸ φανταστικόν). According to him, it still belongs to the irrational part of the soul, acting through the senses.[146] This power is put into operation when the soul, in an analogy to the affection of the senses, is mentally affected when perceiving something. The anterior recesses of the main brain and the psychic *pneuma* therein are indicated as its organ.[147]

The power of thinking (τὸ διανοητικόν) is briefly outlined by Nemesius. He notes that, as a genus, it includes judgments, affirmations, negations, desires (κρίσεις, συγκαταθέσεις, ἀποφυγαί, ὀρμαί). Specifically, it encompasses noetic

143 Meletius Monachus, De natura hominis liber, in: PG 64, 1076AB.

144 Ibid., in: PG 64, 1081B.

145 Cf. Г. Каприев, Душата, когато не става дума за разума. Византийският поглед, в: *Български философски преглед*, 6 (2016) [G. Kapriev, The Soul When Reason Is Not at Issue: The Byzantine Perspective, in: *Bulgarian Philosophical Review*, 6 (2016)—Bulgarian], 132–142.

146 Nemesius Emesenus, De natura hominis, 6, in: PG 40, 632BC.

147 Ibid., in: PG 40, 633AB.

perceptions of being (νοήσεις τῶν ὄντων), virtues, scientific knowledge (ἐπιστῆμαι), principles of the arts (τῶν τεχνῶν οἱ λόγοι), the volitional (τὸ βουλευτικόν), and the capacity to make decisions with free will (τὸ προαιρετικόν). Furthermore, through dreams or premonitions (ὄνειροι), it foretells future events.[148]

5.5.1 Maximus the Confessor

Maximus the Confessor identifies the primary powers of the rational part of the soul as the intellect, rational thinking, imagination, and the senses.[149] He asserts that man has been endowed by God with a soul gifted with intellect, reason, and sensibility (νοῦς, λόγος, αἴσθησις) in such a way that sensibility has an internal connection with the intellect, just as reason has the capacity for speech as its inherent attribute. To this set is added the imagination (φαντασία).[150] It is noteworthy that sensory perception is included in the rational part of the soul, where it is not underestimated as an unreliable bearer of knowledge. Additionally, the traditional triad of "νοῦς—διάνοια—αἴσθησις" is transformed into "νοῦς—λόγος—αἴσθησις" in Maximus' multi-dimensional cognitive structure.

He speaks of three general movements (τρεῖς καθολικὰς κινήσεις) of the soul gathered together in one (εἰς μίαν συναγομένας). One corresponds to the intellect (νοῦς), the other to reason (λόγος), and the third to the senses. The first is simple and beyond interpretation, moving around God in an unknown way. The second is natural, asserting itself through action according to knowledge (ἐπιστήμη). Through it, all natural *logoi*, formed by the first cause, accessible to this knowledge, are recognized. The third is mixed. Through it, the soul comes into contact with external things and—as through symbols[151]—perceives the *logoi* of visible things. For the sensory, through the mediation of reason, to ascend to the intellect, which contains the simple spiritual *logoi* of sensibly perceptible things, is a natural, simple, and infallible movement according to nature.[152]

When the ruling faculty (τὸ ἡγεμονικόν) of the soul is seized by carnal pathos, it falls into the cloud of blindness. Then, the flesh becomes the teacher, and the

148 Nemesius Emesenus, De natura hominis, 12, in: PG 40, 660B. These provisions are, somewhat reduced, but verbatim repeated by Damascene: Johannes Damascenus, Expositio fidei, II, 19, in: ed. Kotter 2, 86, 2–9 (PG 94, 937C).

149 Maximus Confessor, AmbIo, 10, in: PG 91, 1200A.

150 AmbIo, 10, in: PG 91, 1116A.

151 It should be remembered that for Maximus the symbol "always leads to the archetype. This means that the symbol is filled with the reality that is represents, or more precisely, mediates."—M. Lysack, *Asceticism and the Eucharist*, London 2024, 81.

152 AmbIo, 10, in: PG 91, 1112D–1113A.

senses begin to err. All actions of the soul in this state are directed towards the sensory: passion, desire, lust. The human *nous*, led by the passions that infect the senses and by the movement of the sensual perceptible, is capable of error and deviation from the natural movement towards God. Victory over sensory excess leads to a transition to the νοητά, the intelligible.[153]

The reason is the natural center of rational cognition. In order to function correctly, rather than scattering in multiple—including misleading—directions, it is not autonomous but acts as a member of the cognitive structure. The autonomized reason, transformed into the sole measure of self-determination, can be alienated from God. But if, on the contrary, God is accepted as the proper existential center of man, reason is understood as a faculty of the soul, playing a substantial role in the anthropological whole, without, however, being the sole normative human faculty.[154] If the definitively complex, because discursive, reason, operates properly, it is guided by the νοῦς and its simplicity. The νοῦς makes it possible to reduce the multitude of species and principles to the principle of everything, that is, to the divine Logos in His economic effect. Genuine noetic knowledge is indivisible, not quantitative and unified. In general, it is not about immediate knowledge, characteristic of the perfect νοῦς revolving around the Divinity, but about the spiritual world in thought (ὁ κατά διάνοιαν πνευματικὸς κόσμος).[155] It resides precisely in the natural reason, appropriately directed towards true knowledge. This reason advances towards wisdom, although it is not capable of achieving the truth itself. Attaining truth is not an immediate function of reason.[156]

Maximus repeatedly speaks of the "natural law," defined as a natural cognitive action that encompasses the action of the intellect-*nous*, reason, and sensibility, whereby this action is guided by the intellect. Living in accordance with nature makes man once again capable of striving through his reason towards God. This presupposes, first and foremost, that passion (θυμός) and desire (ἐπιθυμία) are in practice subordinated to (righteous) reason through moral philosophy (ἠτικὴ φιλοσοφία), through purifying thought. Then, the *nous* becomes the leader, contemplating only God and His virtue, reason becomes the interpreter and hymn singer of things understood by the intellect, capable of speaking correctly about the ways in which they unite, and sensibility is ennobled by reason so that, when the imaginative faculty receives the various powers and energies

153 AmbIo, 10, in: PG 91, 1112AB.

154 AmbIo, 58, in: PG 91, 1381CD.

155 AmbIo, 21, in: PG 91, 1245B.

156 Cf. G. Kapriev, Weisheit und Philosophie in der Lehre des Maximus Confessor, in: *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiévales*, 85/1 (2018), 207–216.

of beings, it can transmit the known *logoi* of things to the soul as much as possible and thus, through reason and intellect, be able to steer the ship of the soul wisely.[157]

The issue is elaborated by Maximus the Confessor in the fifth chapter of his *Mystagogy*.[158] The consideration begins with the statement that the soul, observed in its principle-*logos*, consists of two general kinds of powers. He indicates mental and life-generating powers (ἐκ νοερᾶς καὶ ζωτικῆς δυνάμεως καθολικῶς συνίστασθαι), immediately making the crucial caveat that only the former moves autonomously by power of the will. Mental power is divided into theoretical (τὸ θεωρητικόν) and practical (τὸ πρακτικόν) parts, recognizing the theoretical as intellect (νοῦς) and the practical as reason (λόγος). They are the first powers of the soul (πρώτας δυνάμεις τῆς ψυχῆς), which (in their action as wisdom and thought) are also defined as the first energies (πρώτας ἐνεγείας) of the soul. The intellect is discussed as the principle of motion (τὸ κινητικόν) of the mental faculty, while reason is depicted as the foreseeing (τὸ προνοητικόν), the life-generating power. The *nous* is and calls itself wisdom, Maximus continues, stating that the intellect is called wisdom when it steadfastly directs all its movements towards God. Reason, on the other hand, is termed "thought" (φρόνησις) when, by managing its life-giving force wisely and providentially through its energies, it connects this power with the intellect and presents it as undistinguished from it.[159]

Wisdom is the power (δύναμις) of the *nous*, contemplation (θεωρία) is its inner state (ἕξις), and knowledge (γνῶσις) is its activity (ἐνέργεια). The intellect-νοῦς passes through wisdom to contemplation, through that to knowledge, through knowledge to unforgettable knowledge (ἄληστος γνῶσις), and through that to truth (ἀλήθεια). Unforgettable knowledge is a perpetual movement in accordance with the state of wisdom, contemplation, and knowledge, that is, with power, *hexis*, and energy around this knowable, which is beyond any knowledge. The *nous* has the limit and the destiny (ὅρος) of its movement in truth; the truth overturns its force, *hexis* and energy. Divine infinity (ἀπειρία) is without quantity, has no parts and extension. It cannot be known by essence.[160]

On the other hand, reason, primarily characterized by discursiveness and distinctiveness and capable of attaining knowledge through the contingent, enters through thought (φρόνησις) into practice (πρᾶξις), through that into well-orderedness or virtue (ἀρετή), and through that into faith (πίστις), which is

157 AmbIo, 10, in: PG 91, 1116D.
158 Mystagogia, 5, in: PG 91, 672D–684A.
159 Ibid., in: PG 91, 673C.
160 Ibid, in: PG 91, 676C–677A.

steadfast and unwavering total conviction (πληροφορία) in the divine. Thought is the power of reason, practice is its *hexis*, and virtue is its energy. Reason expresses faith in deeds through virtue. Through faith, it proceeds towards the Good, in which it has its purpose. Faith is a firm and unchanging anchoring of thought, practice, and virtue.[161] Reason is the energy and utterance of the *nous* like the consequence of the cause, the thought of wisdom, the practice of contemplation, the virtue of knowledge and the faith of unforgettable knowledge. From these arise the relation (σχέσις) to the truth and the good, i.e. to God. The soul, enabled by the grace of the Holy Spirit and its own diligence, to connect without excess or deficiency the reason with the *nous*, thought with wisdom, practice with contemplation, virtue with knowledge, will unite with the good and true God.[162]

5.5.2 Michael Psellus

Large parts of *De omnifaria doctrina* deal with the soul and the intellect-νοῦς. Psellus speaks about the irrational soul,[163] but he is much more interested in the νοεραὶ δυνάμεις, the mental or intellective powers of the soul. The power (δύναμις) of the soul differs from what is designated by πάθος and ἕξις.[164] The activities of the soul are various. Some are stronger and superior (κρείττους καὶ προέχουσαι), others are excited by the body, as far as the soul allows itself to be influenced by the body. Others are common to both the soul and the body, such as change of place: changing place is the work of the body, but the moving motion is the action of the soul.[165] Among the powers of the irrational soul, through which the soul is able to direct the body, Psellus mentions the ὀρεκτική, δοξαστική, which mediates between the rational and the sensory, αἰσθητική and φυσική, which is defined as a generative cause.[166] Among the powers of the soul with regard to its cognitive abilities, some belong only to the soul, others to the soul and the body, and others are related to the materialized spirit (πνεύματι ἐνύλῳ). Psellus mentions ἀντιλεπτική, παθητική and πρακτική, to which φανταστική and νοερή δύναμις are also attributed.[167]

161 Ibid., in: PG 91, 677BC.

162 Ibid., in: PG 91, 677BD. Cf. G. Kapriev, Der Wahrheitsbegriff bei Maximus Confessor, in: *Wahrheit und Geschichte. Die gebrochene Tradition metaphysischen Denkens, Festschrift für Günther Mensching*, eds. A. Mensching-Estakhr, M. Städtler, Würzburg 2012, 137–151.

163 Michael Psellus, De omnifaria doctrina, 61, in: *Michael Psellus. De omnifaria doctrina. Critical Text and Introduction*, ed. L.G. Westerink, Nijmegen 1948 (ed. Westerink), 41–42.

164 Ibid., 77, ed. Westerink, 48.

165 Ibid., 58, ed. Westerink, 40.

166 Ibid., 65, ed. Westerink, 43.

167 Ibid., 56, ed. Westerink, 40.

Psellus repeatedly states that the νοῦς moves the human being. But the mind does it in a interaction with the soul and its cooperating body, emphasizing the rational part of the soul, which guides the irrational parts.[168] The affect (τὸ πάθος) of the soul, Psellus claims, is triple (τριττόν). The first and the highest is the νόησις. The last is the one through which we perceive sensory things through the common sensory (κοινὴ αἴσθησις), which Psellus calls δόξα. In the middle is the διάνοια. With these three, νοῦς, διάνοια and δόξα, man surpasses all living beings. Everything in man that is beyond νόησις, διάνοια and δόξα is the living creature (τὸ ζῶον). Man is a πολυποίκιλος φύσις (manifold nature), but the reason is the true human (ὁ δὴ λόγος ὁ ἀληθινὸς ἄνθρωπος). However, there is also a higher degree of humanity, a more divine and true man, such as the intelligent man (ὁ νοερός). Psellus calls him αὐτοάνθρωπος—self-acting, autonomous man. He contemplates the forms (τῶν εἰδῶν φιλοθεάμονει). Thus Psellus distinguishes three types of people. One is noetic and *nous*uniform; the other is rational and tripartite, having three powers (τριδύναμος); the latter is sensitive (αἰσθητικός), many-faced, and many-sided. The most sublime man, the man in the proper sense of the word, is thoughtful and contemplative, and his soul is such.[169]

The intellect, every νοῦς, has everlasting (αἰώνια) essence, power and activity (ἐνέργεια). It understands (νοεῖ) everything at once. Because it is immovable, it stands within the measure of time neither in its essence, nor in its power and energy.[170] However, Psellus introduces a differentiation. He explains that there are two kinds of human νοῦς. One kind is merely noetic (νοερὸς μόνον), the other is divine, because it is attached to God. The simple noetic νοῦς does not impart the divine to the soul. It can become madness (ἀνοία) by transformation, although it is everlasting according to its essence and the noetic ἐνέργεια. The νοῦς participating in God allows the soul to participate in the divine.[171]

According to Psellus, the entire soul is either divine or has fallen into madness (ἄνοια), or it is in between the two.[172] Thanks to its participation in the νοῦς, the soul is also noetic.[173] The soul is a bodiless essence, indivisible in itself (ἀμέριστον), but divided (χωριστή) by the body, which is inseparable (ἀχώριστος) from the soul and indispensable to it.[174] The essence of the soul is everlasting,

168 Ibid., 194–201, ed. Westerink, 96–99.
169 Ibid., 31, ed. Westerink, 30.
170 Ibid., 23, ed. Westerink, 27.
171 Ibid., 28, ed. Westerink, 28.
172 Ibid., 30, ed. Westerink, 29–30.
173 Ibid., 28–30, ed. Westerink, 29–30.
174 Cf. ibid., 35, ed. Westerink, 31.

but its activity (ἐνέργεια) is according to time (κατὰ χρόνον) and what follows it (τὰ τούτοις ἀκόλουθα). Psellus emphasizes that the essence, the power, and the energy of the soul are distinct from each another: they are three faces or three capitals of the ψυχογονία. Their existence is different, their harmony is different, and their *eidos* resulting from them is different.[175]

5.5.3 Gregory Palamas

The soul, united with the body it is co-created with, extends over the whole body, emphasizes Gregory Palamas. It is neither localized in any place, nor contained (περιεχομένη), but it is united, encompassing, and vivifying.[176] Palamas is not at all willing to underestimate sensory perception and emphasizes that we should not deify the intellectual world, even though it has no bodily structure and nothing in our nature is higher than the *nous*.[177] The entire *nous* together with the senses has fallen after the fall in those who are imperfect.[178]

Palamas' argument that human nature is superior to angelic nature by the fact that God has endowed only humans with all forms of cognition should be recalled here. We possess simultaneously noetic, rational, and sensory knowledge. The triadic shape (τὸ τριαδικόν) of our cognition precisely shows that humans are an image of God to a higher degree than angels. Sensory ability is by nature connected to rationality and gives rise to the diverse array of arts, sciences, and knowledge that God has bestowed only upon humans.[179] They are perceived as the highest level of realization of human abilities, expressing the dignity and superiority of humans.

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175 Ibid., 52, ed. Westerink, 38.

176 Gregorius Palamas, Capita 150, 61, in: Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα, τ. 5, επιμ. Π. Χρήστου, Θεσσαλονίκη 1992, 70, 24–28.

177 Ibid., 27, ed. Christou v, 49, 31–50, 3.

178 Ibid., 50, ed. Christou v, 64, 30–65, 3.

179 Ibid., 63, ed. Christou v, 71, 24–32.

CHAPTER 5

Human Knowledge

Human knowledge is among the significant topics of Byzantine philosophy. Within the entire Byzantine tradition, the knowledge of God represents the highest cognitive level. It is not only the most sublime theme and—in the case of rational knowledge of God—the highest level of first philosophy, but also the horizon from which all knowledge is conceptualized. The concept of knowledge as a whole includes both natural knowledge, through which creation and thus God is understood, and immediate knowledge of God, through which spiritual experience leads to participation in Divinity.

For Byzantine philosophers, as for all philosophers of the long millennium misleadingly referred to as the "Middle Ages," the universality of human reason is crucial for human knowledge, in both dimensions of its "models": weak and strong universality. The model of weak universality determines it within the limits of human reason and the corresponding verbal articulation within the scope of these limits. The model of strong universality, on the other hand, constantly implies a transcending of human reason which, in approaching the whole and the first par excellence, surpasses its limits, taking on, in a sense, a divine perspective.[1]

1 Rational Knowledge

"We are born with reason (λόγος) and strive through reason toward the Logos (διὰ λόγου πρὸς Λόγον σπεύδοντες)."[2] This decisive statement by Gregory the Theologian, already quoted, is preceded by the consideration that we are obligated either to philosophize or to show respect for philosophy if we do not wish to entirely fall from the Good and be judged for irrationality (ἀλογία).[3] In the image of God, the Cappadocians designate the center of human essence as the intellect (νοῦς) and the reason, conceived as a valuable divine gift, which, in its fullness in knowledge of God, requires revelation and faith. It should be

1 A. Speer, *1000 Jahre Philosophie. Ein anderer Blick auf die Philosophie des „Mittelalters"*, Paderborn 2023, 71–72.

2 Gregorius Nazianzenus, Oratio 25, in: PG 35, 1197A.

3 Ibid.

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recalled that for Gregory of Nazianzus, philosophy is defined as the universal guide, in accordance with the measure of reason, on the path to truth.[4] The lack of reason and knowledge in approaching God predisposes one to sailing in faith without a helmsman.[5] Conversely, the task of one who truly possesses the spirit of God and has become more perfect in contemplation consists precisely in not merely rejecting all definitions of the Divine, but in understanding and investigating philosophically (προσφιλοσοφεῖν τε καὶ προσεξτάζειν) the entire being (ὅλον τὸ εἶναι), which evidently includes the being of God.[6]

John Damascene will also unequivocally state that there is nothing more valuable than knowledge (γνῶσις), for it is the light of rational souls, while its absence, ignorance (ἄγνοια), is a darkening of the mind.[7] Pretentious ignorance (ἀμαθία) is regarded as a scarcely forgivable fault.[8] And for him too, revelation and faith rest upon true rational knowledge. However, the work of reason is not only to confirm religious truths and defend them from misleading doctrines and heresies. Reason has its own competencies, not only in the sphere of the contingent, but also in the true knowledge of God. The formulation of the truths of faith also becomes exceptionally relevant to the use of reason. The rational exposition of truth—both of this world and of the Divine—is the duty of the Christian thinker.[9]

1.1 *The Four Elements of Knowledge*

The model of thought unfolded by Byzantine philosophers is oriented towards the formulation of faith, as outlined by the Apostle Paul. According to him, faith is a hypostasis of things hoped for, an argument for things not seen, i.e., of that which is not given phenomenally.[10] The theoretical-cognitive accent cannot go unnoticed. Based on this, the positioning of faith in the field of knowledge is established in a paradigmatic way by Maximus the Confessor.

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4 Ibid.

5 Oratio 32, in: PG 36, 179B.

6 Oratio 28, 9, in: PG 36, 37A.

7 Johannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 1, in: *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, Bd. 1, ed. B. Kotter, Berlin 1969, 53, 2–5 (PG 94, 529A).

8 Fons scientiae, praef., in: *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, Bd. 1, ed.B. Kotter, Berlin 1969, 52, 30–32 (PG 94, 524A).

9 Cf. G. Kapriev, Der Gebrauch der Vernunft und die Offenbarung gemäß Gregorius dem Theologen, Maximus Confessor und Johannes Damascenus, in: *De usu rationis. Vernunft und Offenbarung im Mittelalter*, ed. G. Mensching, (Contradictio 9), Würzburg, 2007, 41–43.

10 Hebr. 11, 1: "Ἔστιν δὲ πίστις ἐλπιζομένων ὑπόστασις, πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων".

In the context of his explanation of the number of the Gospels as analogous with the four elements (στοιχεῖα) of the sensory world: earth, water, air, and fire, Maximus says that the four Gospels should be understood as a symbol corresponding to faith, and practical, natural, and theological philosophy. In this analogy, faith is compared to the element earth, and theological philosophy to the element fire.[11] The analogy emphasizes the coexistence and cooperation of the four elements of knowledge. Their synchronous action is presupposed and required.

Gregory the Theologian coined the thesis that faith is the fulfillment of our reason (ἡ γὰρ πίστις τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς λόγου πλήρωσις)—in it, reason reaches its fullness.[12] Maximus the Confessor, it should be recalled here, divides the noetic part of the soul into theoretical and practical, with the theoretical naming the intellect (νοῦς), and the practical naming reason (λόγος).[13] Reason enters into practice through thought (φρόνησις), through that into virtuous conduct or virtue (ἀρετή), and through that into faith (πίστις), which is a stable and unshakable full confidence (πληροφορία) in the divine. The highest limit is the Good, at which point reason ceases its movement because the Good is God, and by nature, He sets the limit for every power of every reason.[14] Faith, therefore, is the pinnacle of activity of the reason rightly directed towards the Good. It is true knowledge from un-demonstrated origins (πίστις γάρ ἐστι, γνῶσις ἀληθὴς ἀναποδείκτους ἔχουσα τάς ἀρχάς), which surpasses the power of every reason and intellect.[15] The path to deification begins with faith, defined as a grace-given gift and power.[16]

1.2 *Practical, Natural, and Theological Philosophy*

The three aforementioned common movements of the soul—according to intellect, reason, and senses—are simultaneously inherent in the soul, Maximus asserts. After all, they are also understood as cognitive "stages." Maximus presents the "stages" or "phases" of the ascent of knowledge through practical, natural, and theological philosophy. Practical philosophy is exercised by the contemplative soul (ψυχή θεωρητική) to direct its movements and reasoning through it. The "stages" of cognitive ascent are in constant interaction and mutual influence.

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11 Maximus Confessor, Opuscula theologica et polemica (ThPol), 1, in: PG 91, 9A; Quaestiones ad Thalassium (Thal.), prol., in: PG 90, 248B.

12 Gregorius Nazianzenus, Oratio 29, 21, in: PG 36, 104A.

13 Maximus Confessor, Mystagogia (Myst.), 5, in: PG 91, 672D.

14 Ibid, in: PG 91, 677BC.

15 Capita theologica et polemica, 1, 9, in: PG 90, 1085D. Thal., 33, in: PG 90, 373B.

16 Myst., 1, in: PG 91, 668A; Myst., 24, in: PG 91, 705A.

Initially, the soul must learn to recognize the *logoi*/principles of things beneath the surface of sensory forms in order to then become capable of understanding the *logoi* of economy in their multiplicity through the continuous movement of reason. But this knowledge is acquired as "ways of the visible," which offer only partial assimilation of God's wisdom. Then the soul must detach itself from the subject-object division inherent in both the sensory and rational spheres. The soul is to rise above matter as well as form (εἶδος) to enter into immediate noetic cognition. Through it, it understands, not the divine essence, of course, but "that which surrounds God," i.e., that which in God is directed towards creation. It recognizes in this way both at once the *logoi* of created beings, and the "*logos* that relates to God" (ὁ περὶ αὐτοῦ λόγος) accessible to the human *nous*, i.e. everything that concerns eternity, infinity, goodness, wisdom, and power. Achieving this higher knowledge requires personal transformation, wherein man elevates the senses to reason and reason to *nous*.[17]

1.2.1 Practical Philosophy

Maximus does not consider practice or practical philosophy simply to be a preparation for knowledge or as a separate cognitive stage. Practice and contemplative knowledge are an inseparable pair, according to their foundation, they are the same.[18] Maximus admits that knowledge without practicing the virtues is possible, but it is equal to the "theology of demons," resembling faith without love and reigning in hell.[19] The inseparable connection between practice and knowledge is formulated through the expressions γνῶσις ἔμπρακτος and πρᾶξις ἔνσοφος.[20] The question about whether practice or cognition is "higher" is completely irrelevant.[21]

Practice (πρᾶξις, φιλοσοφία πρακτική) consists in actualizing and realizing the virtues, the result of asceticism—the practiced purification of the intellect, soul, and body. Like Origen and Evagrius, Maximus defines practice as the purification of the intellect-νοῦς and the proper use of rational capacity.[22]

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17 Maximus Confessor, Ambigua ad Ioannem (AmbIo), 10, in: PG 91, 1112D–1113AB; 1161C. Engl. transl. N. Constas in: Maximos the Confessor, The Ambigua, Cmabridge, Mass.–London 2014.

18 Thal., 3, in: PG 90, 273CD.

19 Maximus Confessor, Epistula (Ep.), 20, in: PG 91, 601C; Thal., 48 in: PG 90, 440A.

20 AmbIo., prol., in: PG 91, 1032AB.

21 Cf. H.U. v. Balthasar, *Kosmische Liturgie. Das Weltbild Maximus des Bekenners*, Einsiedeln ²1961, 332; L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator. The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, Lund 1965, 136, 358–359.

22 Cf. Thal., 3, in: PG 90, 273A.

At the pinnacle of practical philosophy is apatheia (ἀπάθεια)—dispassion, detachment from all types of affections.[23] The process of liberating the soul from passions fully realizes human nature and its destiny.[24] "Apathy" is directly related to humility but not to passivity. It is focused on inner balance, which is not related to aversion to the external world but to active love for God and neighbor.[25] Maximus the Confessor consistently demonstrates the connection between passionlessness (ἀπάθεια), apathy, and compassion (συμπαθεία), sympathy.[26] Apathy is the full actualization of virtues. In someone liberated from passion, the natural energy of the senses is transformed by the power of perceived spiritual disposition (πρὸς πνευματικὴν ἕξιν μεταβαλόντα), which is a condition for the ascending transition of contemplative knowledge into spirit (ἐν πνεύματι γνωστικῆς θεωρίας ὑπέρβασις).[27] Thus, the remarkable connection between practical philosophy, natural contemplation, and theology is succinctly indicated.

Maximus asserts that virtues are inherent in the image of God, i.e., in human nature, where they are potentially present in equal measure. However, they should be realized by the person themselves through action, differing in direction and intensity in different hypostases. Practicing virtue necessarily requires a hypostatic dimension because the initiative comes from volitional disposition and directed choice. Virtues reveal stable inner-personal states (ἕξεις) and the personal orientation of natural energies. The essence of all virtues is Christ Himself, in whom the practitioner of virtue is, moves, and lives. The one who participates in virtue participates in Christ. This is not about participation in essence, but about a relational exchange (σχετικὴ ἀντίδοσις) of energies, a *perichoresis* between human and divine properties. Advancement in virtue is not merely a moral act but a personal existential effort. It is an eschatological opening of man in present space-time for a personal encounter and communion with Christ.[28]

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23 Thal., 55, in: PG 90, 544CD.

24 Thal., 16, in: PG 90, 300B–301A.

25 Cf. K. Savvidis, *Die Lehre von der Vergöttlichung des Menschen bei Maximos dem Bekenner und ihre Rezeption durch Gregorios Palamas*, St. Ottilien 1997, 122–123; L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator. The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, Lund 1965, 323–324.

26 AmbIo, 30, in: PG 91, 1273BD.

27 AmbIo, 20, in: PG 91, 1237CD.

28 Cf. Disputatio cum Pyrrho (Pyrrh.), in: PG 91, 309BC; AmbIo, 7; 48, in: PG 91, 1081C–1085A; 1365A. Cf. J.-C. Larchet, *La divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris 1996, 159–163; 466–475; 482–488; С. Тутеков, *Добродетелта заради истината. Богословски и антропологични основи на аретологията*, Велико Търново 2009 [S. Toutekov, *Virtue for the Sake of Truth: The Theological and Anthropological Founda-*

1.2.2 The Conscience

At the root of practice lie faith, a good conscience, and repentance, which is μετανοία—literally, change of mind. Conscience (συνείδησις) holds a much more significant place for Maximus than for his predecessors, both pagan and Christian. He claims that conscience is like the priest in someone's home; it is the Word of God that enters the soul. The Word, as the High Priest, enters the soul as the purest light and, by revealing wicked intentions and condemning actions, offers ways of conversion and purification. Conscience is present both in the pious and the sinful. It is the being-with of the Logos and of man, shaping their common perception and understanding. Conscience is co-knowledge, shared knowledge between man and God. The pangs of conscience are negative consequences of this shared knowledge, through which God's law operates in the soul of the sinner. Conscience is a strictly personal power of the soul with its sphere of action in this world. Driven by the co-knowledge with Christ, it constitutes a personal judgment over one's own works and thoughts, realized in an internal dialogue with the Word of God. Impeccable conscience is the result of the ultimate rejection of vices and ignorance (κακία καὶ ἀγνωσία), which strive to destroy the Logos within man. Pure conscience, righteous and rightly human-divine co-knowledge, is the foundation for both virtues and correct noetic and rational knowledge of the immaterial and the Divine.[29]

Conscience is also the decisive authority in relations with state and church institutions. Maximus rejects the right of the emperor and secular rulers to make decisions on matters of faith. These questions are within the competence of the Church, and the truth of Christian doctrine is established by God Himself. Before Him, and not before earthly authorities, one's own conscience is ultimately responsible in its true sense.[30] Those who follow Christ and are worthy members of the body of Christ by imitating Him are obliged to boldly confess the pious words of this truth. Boldness (παρρεσία) in defending Christ's truth should also be exercised in the presence of the powerful in the world.[31] So Maximus teaches and demonstrates in his life's work. The follower of Christ, whose kingdom is not of this world, recognizes no other power over his mind, conscience, and work when it comes to asserting the truth of Christ's teaching.

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tions of Aretology, Veliko Tarnovo 2009—Bulgarian], 182–183; 323–337; C. Steel, Maximus Confessor on *theory* and *praxis* a commentary on *Ambigua ad Johannem* VI (10) 1–19, in: *Theoria, Praxis and the Contemplative Live after Plato and Aristotle*, eds. T. Bénatouil, M. Bonazzi, Leiden 2012, 229–257.

29 Cf. AmbIo, 10; 56, in: PG 91, 1120BC; 1125B; 1173CD; 1380CD.

30 Cf. Relatio motionis, 4; Dispute at Byzia, 4; 11, in: *Maximus the Confessor and his Companions. Documents from Exile*, eds. P. Allen, B. Neil, Oxford 2002, 56–58; 88–90; 110.

31 AmbIo, 54, in: PG 91, 1377B.

This holds true even when the authority deviating from this truth is the present church hierarchy in a specific historical situation. Thus, one remains a worthy member of the Church and a true Christian.[32]

1.2.3 Natural Contemplation

Maximus the Confessor employs the concept of "knowledge" (γνῶσις) in regard to the cognitive level of contemplation,[33] but usually includes the more precise term "natural contemplation" (φυσικὴ θεωρία)[34] or "natural philosophy" (φυσικὴ φιλοσοφία).[35] This refers to philosophy resulting from the intense activation of natural human reason. The term "cognitive contemplation ⟨of nature⟩" (γνωστικὴ θεωρία ⟨τῆς φύσεως⟩) is also encountered.[36] Its higher form is also termed θεωρία πνευματική—spiritual contemplation.[37] Through φυσικὴ θεωρία in the strict sense of the word, the physical world is known in its principles-λόγοι, and the noetic world, through which one reaches theological or unforgettable knowledge (ἄληστος γνῶσις), through γνῶσις.[38] Maximus adheres to the customary formula of knowing God through His creations in a specific way, sharpening this position and connecting it with his teaching on the *logoi* of beings.[39]

Maximus asserts that there are five ways the divine presence is revealed in creation: essence, movement, difference, mixture, and disposition. The first three demonstrate God as Creator, Provider, and Judge, while the latter two illustrate His relationships with creation. However, when contemplating God "through essence," it is not about His essence, but that of created things, indicating the limitation of this type of theological knowledge.[40] Through this "τρόποι," natural contemplation is achieved, which is knowledge of the λόγοι of creation. The cognition of rational souls of things through their λόγοι is the point of harmonious contact between reason (λόγος) and intellect (νοῦς). The λόγοι

32 Cf. Relatio motionis, 1; 6; Dispute at Byzia, 2, in: *Maximus the Confessor and his Companions. Documents from Exile*, eds. P. Allen and B. Neil, Oxford 2002, 48–50; 60–62; 82–86.

33 Cf. Thal., 55, in: PG 90, 556A.

34 Cf. Thal., 25, in: PG 90, 332A; AmbIo, 45, in: PG 91, 1356B.

35 AmbIo, 37, 91, in: PG 91, 1293B; AmbIo, 50, in: PG 91, 1396C.

36 AmbIo, 32, in: PG 91, 1285A.

37 Myst., 2, in: PG 91, 669C; AmbIo, 10, in: PG 91, 1156B. Cf. L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator. The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, Lund 1965, 355–356.

38 Myst., 2, in: PG 91, 669C; AmbIo, 10, in: PG 91, 1156B.

39 W. Völker, *Maximus Confessor als Meister des geistlichen Lebens*, Wiesbaden 1965, 301.

40 Cf. V. Karayiannis, *Maxime le Confesseur: essence et énergies de Dieu*, Paris 1993, 214; L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator. The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, Lund 1965, 72–74.

are discovered behind the external figures (σχήματα) of beings. The intellect, freed from sensuality, imagination, and figuration, recognizes the pneumatic sense of beings and this cognition is not trivial speculative knowledge about the world.

In order to delineate levels of cognitive perfection, Maximus introduces the technical terms "shadow," "image," and "truth" (σκία, εἰκών, ἀληθεία)[41] and interprets the relevant competence of human cognitive faculties. He shows that all possible cognitive situations have different dimensions and levels. Those who try to cognize the *logoi* of things properly, but are still bound to and therefore dependent on flesh and matter, recognize them in a material and earthly way. The judgment (κρίσις) of natural human reason is in relation (σχέσις) to matter and things subject to change. For this reason, such judgment is mixed, connected principally to practice and dependent on it.[42] Those who cognize in this way make use of senses and reason, investigating through phenomena and figures.

1.2.4 The Arts and Sciences

In a passage provocative for the interpreter,[43] Maximus considers the knowledge of phenomena, beginning with sensibility and achieved through the work of reason, where arts and sciences originate, as a compensatory ability. It should provide the possibility of recovering to some extent the lost immediate knowledge of God and life close to God.

Maximus writes that in this mode of existence, man acquires three additional mechanisms that move him, but were unnecessary and therefore absent in his pre-fall state. None of them, Maxim insists, motivated pre-fallen man initially (κατ' ἀρχήν) and necessarily (ἐξ ἀνάγκης). The impulse of man now comes from the following three things: from irrational representations (περί φαντασίας ἀλόγους), a result of the delusion of passions; from the principles of arts practiced for utility (περί λόγους τεχνῶν ἐκ περιστάσεως διά τήν χρείαν); from natural principles according to the law of nature, to know them (περί φυσικούς λόγους ἐκ τοῦ νόμου τῆς φύσεως διά μάθησιν). Cognitive existence in the paradisiacal state did not occur through "natural contemplation" (περί τήν φύσιν θεωρίας), i.e., through the abilities of natural reason, which necessarily cognizes discursively, but through the immediate knowledge of truth because there was nothing between God and the first man (οὐδέν οὖν εἶχεν ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος

41 AmbIo., 21, in: PG 91, 1253C.

42 AmbIo., 10, in: PG 91, 1109D–1112A.

43 AmbIo, 45, in: PG 91, 1353C–1356A.

μεταξύ Θεοῦ καί αὐτοῦ), posited as an object of scientific knowledge (πρός εἴδησιν). Since in his existence man did not need anything, he was free from the necessity arising from circumstances requiring arts created for utility. Being in kinship (συγγένεια) with God through the power of love, man was "naked in simplicity" (γυμνός τῇ ἁπλότητι) because he surpassed every inquiry proceeding according to nature. He was indifferent to arts in his life (ζωῇ τῇ ἀτέχνῳ) because he was unblemished by any life experiencing the need for the arts. By the power of his own free choice, man now rightfully stands lower than what, according to his origin, he has surpassed by nature. Like scientific knowledge, definitively bound to the actions of reason, therefore, the arts are not counted among man's activities in his paradisiacal state. Unlike irrational representations, however, they are not condemned but rather viewed very positively, albeit solely for the needs of present existence.

In Byzantine culture, there were no tensions between art (τέχνη) and science (ἐπιστήμη), between skilled craftsmanship and scientific knowledge. There was no competition between them, even when science was sometimes referred to as logical art (λογικὴ τέχνη); there is no subordination, nor were there transitions from one to the other: there were no sought-after paths from *ars* to *scientia*. They were considered as two types of qualified human activity,[44] as evident as their unity within the horizon of their common anthropological level. The key is that Byzantine culture distinguishes between sensory and rational knowledge, but also regards them as two indivisible dimensions of the same cognitive level, characteristic of the psychosomatic being. Sensitive-rational knowledge is a unified apparatus from which both "arts" and "sciences" arise. There were, however, noticeable tensions between views of its positioning in the realms of anthropology. Byzantine thinkers are not unified on the place of arts and sciences in the inherent modes of human nature and their consequent anthropological value.

In this context, it suffices to recall Gregory Palamas's categorical assertion that the triadic form (τὸ τριαδικόν) of our knowledge shows that we are more in the image of God than angels because it encompasses all cognitive forms. We possess simultaneously the sensory, the rational, and the noetic. Sensory capacity is by nature related to the rational and begets the diverse array of arts, sciences, and knowledge that God has endowed only in humans. Arts and sciences are, therefore, clear and irrefutable evidence of the superiority of human nature over the angelic, even in the existential mode of the fall. Arts and sciences are not only not underestimated, they have extremely high value for

44 Cf. e.g. Johannes Damascenus, Dialectica, 3, in: ed. Kotter 1, 53, 17–25 (PG 94, 533C).

Gregory Palamas and his spiritual and intellectual successors, not only in the status of humanity after the fall but fundamentally: they manifest the super-angelic divine likeness of human nature.[45]

1.2.5 The Truth

The distinction between two types of knowledge is of crucial importance to Maximus the Confessor. One is knowledge focused on the contingent and based solely on the abilities of a self-proclaimed reason, through which it considers the "reality" of "that which has become" through the lens of passions and introduces the mental movements of this aeon (τὰ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου νοήματα) into the spaces of knowledge. The other type is noetic knowledge. The *nous*, becoming wise in spirit, releases divine *logoi* from their material envelopment and places them in contemplative modes of knowledge. It makes the movements of its soul uniform with the state of bodiless (i.e. the purely noetic) beings. In this way, it encompasses (and not vice versa) the soul with all its faculties and gives them another, noetic form, through which they are given a new format. In this format, phenomena are known not according to their visibility. Knowledge does not follow the dictates of phenomena and the logic imposed by them, but grasps them in their noetic form. By recognizing them, the *nous* introduces them into immaterial and bodiless knowledge as its elements, not merely as its "objects." The *nous* actively shapes reality, rather than being a passive recipient of it.[46] This *nous* is capable of approaching the truth.

In principle natural reason is not able to produce adequate concepts about the infinite, eternal, unique, and perfectly simple. Therefore, concepts based on logic directed towards the contingent are unable to achieve the truth of the infinite, the timeless, and the non-spatial. The audacity of not accepting this fact leads to the denial of this truth precisely because it is immeasurable and incompatible with the "truths" attainable by discursive reason.[47] But human reason must follow the divine Logos according to the truth. This involves not only the correct understanding of the world and language but also delving into the *logoi* of things, and therefore into the Logos itself.[48] How can this requirement be reconciled with the thesis that the reason itself cannot directly contain

45 Cf. Г. Каприев, Τέχνη и ἐπιστήμη: византийските напрежения, в: *Sine arte scientia nihil est. Изследвания в чест на проф. дфн Олег Георгиев*, съст. Г. Каприев, София 2019 [G. Kapriev, Art and Science: Byzantine Tensions, in: *Sine arte scientia nihil est. Studies in Honor of Prof. DSc Oleg Georgiev*, ed. G. Kapriev, Sofia 2019—Bulgarian], 242–249.

46 AmbIo., 51, in: PG 91, 1368C–1369C.

47 Ibid., 40, in: PG 91, 1304B.

48 Ibid., 12, in: PG 91, 1208B.

truth? Maximus clearly states that the *nous*, also called wisdom (σοφία), is the one that is led to truth (ἀλήθεια) through true and continuous knowledge. Truth is definitively linked not to the reason but to the *nous*.

Elevating the νοῦς towards truth begins with the impetus of wisdom, which is defined as its power (δύναμις), while the *nous* itself is termed as wisdom in potentiality (δυνάμει), or, if one wishes, potency. Through it, the *nous* achieves contemplation, which in turn is grasped as the stable internal state (ἕξις) of the *nous*. Thanks to it, knowledge (γνῶσις), the action or ἐνέργεια of the *nous*, is activated. The next step in elevation is true knowledge, which can lead to the truth, described and defined as the goal and completion of the *nous*.[49] However, this does not imply that truth becomes the possession of the *nous* in this manner, nor does it become its immanent property.

Maximus unequivocally states that the *nous* attains the limit and definition of its movement around truth (περὶ τὴν ἀλήθειν ὁ νοῦς ὅρον τῆς κινήςεως δέχεται).[50] The expression indicates that it is not about immediate contact but about approximation. It is emphasized that unforgettable knowledge is a constant, or rather eternal movement (ἀεικινεσία) around the knowable, which stands above all knowledge. The limit of unforgettable knowledge is the truth as the knowable, about which nothing remains hidden. The essence and functioning of this limit are examined in response to the question "Why is the unforgettable called limited (περιγραφόμενον)?" And the answer is that it is limited and determined by God as truth (Θεῷ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ περατούμενον). God is the truth around which the *nous* moves, continuously and without falling into oblivion. This movement can never cease because there can be no limit where there is no interval, or extension (διάστημα). Divine limitlessness (ἀπειρία) is non-quantitative (ἄποσον), indivisible, without dimension and extension in an absolute sense, not inherently unattainable and not subject to any understanding.[51]

Maximus clearly suggests that truth itself remains unattainable for the *nous* and yet—as its ultimate goal, around which it incessantly revolves in its perfection—it constitutes and regulates its being. Truth is the ultimate limit of the *nous*, its term and principle, which make it possible, effective, and truly existing. Truth is the limit of the being of the *nous*, which it is capable of perceiving at the highest stage of its ascent, without, however, fully achieving or comprehending it. This true apprehension of truth *par excellence* is the priority of the *nous* and of no other psychic power.

49 Ibid., in: PG 91, 676CD.

50 Ibid., in: PG 91, 676C.

51 Ibid., in: PG 91, 676D–677A.

This does not mean that reason in no way encounters truth and is not in any connection with it. The ultimate limit of reason is the Good, which is God, setting a limit on every power of the reason. With the Good, every movement of the reason finds its end.[52] God, who is the Truth, is identical with God, who is the Good. The existential task of the soul is to gather together its powers and energies and to become uniform.[53] In this unification lies the deification of the human being.

Divinization is a disposition (θέσις) on the part of God.[54] But grace does not prove its effect without *gnosis*, that is, without human movement towards practical elevation and knowledge.[55] Divinization follows cognition (γνῶσις), wherein the mind-νοῦς becomes godlike through contemplation of the ineffable.[56] Divinization presupposes that the soul brings together causes with their effects and powers with energies, and presents them together to God. Energy is also a manifestation (φανέρωσις), insists Maximus. From the perspective of the unified soul, reason is a manifestation of the *nous*, thinking of wisdom, practice of contemplation, virtue of knowledge, faith of unforgettable knowledge. From this derives the immanent relationship of the soul with Truth and Good. This relationship is divine knowledge (or "divine science"—θεία ἐπιστήμη), infallible knowledge, love and peace, in which and through which deification occurs. It is divine knowledge because it is the completion (συμπλήρωσις) of all knowledge about God and the Divine that can be accessible to humans, and full comprehension of the virtues. It is infallible knowledge because it rises to truth and grants us constant experience in the Divine.[57]

In this state of divine tranquility, which in itself transcends both the reason and *nous* because it is the unification of the uniform soul with God, the existence of reason ceases, which divides the soul into many parts with its thoughts. The soul now directly contemplates the *logoi* and causes of the beings in the divine Logos, which no longer dwells outside the soul but entirely within it. It concerns the *logoi* and causes, towards which the soul previously moved slowly through the dividing discursive methods of rational knowledge, Maximus adds.[58]

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52 Ibid., in: PG 91, 677C.

53 Ibid., in: PG 91, 677C–680B; 681B. Cf. G. Kapriev, Der Wahrheitsbegriff bei Maximus Confessor, in: *Wahrheit und Geschichte. Die gebrochene Tradition metaphysischen Denkens*, Festschrift für G. Mensching, eds. A. Mensching-Estakhr, M. Städtler, Würzburg 2012, 137–151.

54 Opuscula theologica et polemica, 1, in: PG 91, 33C.

55 Quaestiones ad Thalassium (Thal.), 15, in: PG 90, 400C; Thal., 59, in: PG 90, 604C et 608AB.

56 Thal., 15, in: PG 90, 297D.

57 Ibid., 15, in: PG 90, 680BC.

58 Ibid., 15, in: PG 90, 681AB.

1.2.6 Reason and Revelation according to the Representatives of the Anthropocentric Line

The assertion of the interaction between reason and grace, revelation respectively in the case of comprehensive knowledge, is a position characteristic not only of Maximus personally or the philosophers from the theocentric line. Katerina Ierodiakonou convincingly demonstrates,[59] with regard to Michael Psellus, John Italus, and Eustratius of Nicaea, the high place occupied by reason in their programs, as well as the significance for these thinkers of revelation and the limitation of reason. There are many passages in Psellus' writings, she shows, "in which he underlines the importance of rational thought, logical syllogisms, and especially demonstrations as something which essentially characterizes human beings and helps them in their attempt to understand reality, and in particular nature. At the same time Psellus explicitly says that logical reasoning does not bring one into conflict with Christian doctrine." Although Psellus defends the view that rational thought is the most important characteristic of the human being, he also emphasizes its limitation when it comes to the highest principles of reality and the unknowability of God. There are things that can be known by reason, while others, namely the ultimate principles of reality, can be known only by illumination. For Psellus, who here fundamentally follows the Neoplatonists, the enlightening intellect is replaced by the Christian God. For Italus, theology is a part of philosophy, supposed to culminate in the attempt to understand the first principle of everything. And, according to him, a zone of the ineffable and the incomprehensible exists due to the unknowability of the essence of God and the limited powers of the human mind. When speaking about the illumination of the mind by the ultimate principle, Italus also replaces the Neoplatonic concept of intellect with the Christian God, but, unlike Psellus, he appears not to leave much space for grace. Italus seems to believe that Divine illumination is something we receive because we have managed to achieve a level of contemplation after we have put our divine share, our rational soul, fully into action. Eustratius of Nicaea himself, famous for his firm conviction in the legitimacy of using Aristotelian syllogistics in theology, is of the opinion that logical thinking in the theological sphere proper requires the support of divine enlightenment in the purified human soul.[60]

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59 K. Ierodiakonou, Rationality and Revelation in Eleventh and Twelfth Century Byzantium, in: *De usu rationis. Vernunft und Offenbarung im Mittelalter* (Contradictio 9), ed. G. Mensching, Würzburg 2007, 19–31.

60 Cf. et P. Joannou, *Die Illuminationslehre des Michael Psellus und Joannes Italos*, Ettal 1956.

1.2.7 Unforgettable Knowledge

Maximus the Confessor shows a far-reaching sobriety in the pursuit of attaining knowledge of God and of true knowledge in general. He speaks of a gradual ascent to the "mountain of transfiguration." The phenomena of creation, as well as the words of Scripture, should not be passed over as insignificant, let alone despised. On the contrary, they are the "vestments of God" that must be understood and honored if one seeks to truly know God. Only after fully grasping them is it possible for the senses to quieten down and the intellect to perceive the "body of the Logos," meaning the truth, through which he gives this higher form of knowledge of God to both reason and the senses, which are thereby transformed.[61]

The task of natural reason here is not the immediate possession of truth given by revelation and grace, but the investigation of what is true. This is accomplished through intellectual labor, not by resorting to easier solutions, which largely stem from pagan teachings.[62] In any case, reason is inclined "to fight for the truth" and never to be entirely within the truth. "To be entirely within the truth" means to know from one's own actual experience divine life—as far as it is accessible to humans—in its fullness which is the source and foundation of all that is true, thus God is known in and through everything.[63]

The state attained is also described as "detachment from everything."[64] This means avoiding the influences exerted by the contingent, it means liberation from them. The contingent can no longer be the source or criterion of truth. The saint or sage has become superior to matter and form through virtue—ὑπέρ τήν ὕλεν καί τό εἶδος κατά τήν ἀρετήν γεγόμενος.[65]

At this level, cognitive processes proceed differently. One does not know through observing individual things, thoughts, or concepts through which nature or knowledge is expressed, but quite the opposite. Since the νοῦς resides in the one Logos, it knows, as far as it is possible for human faculties to do so, συνεκδοχικῶς, that is, in the form of synecdoche or synthetically. The intellect contemplates the one Logos and from its perspective knows the individual beings and cognitive units, from which it produces judgments about them. It therefore recognizes them from the perspective of their own truth and thus obtains the most true knowledge possible. This knowledge, which is in no way diminished by the defectiveness of the finite, should be defined as infallible. In

61 AmbIo, 10, in: PG 91, 1132C–1133A.
62 Ibid., 7, in: PG 91, 1069A.
63 Ibid., 10, in: PG 91, 1124B.
64 Ibid., 10, in: PG 91, 1153D–1156A.
65 Ibid., 10, in: PG 91, 1141B.

this regard, it is repeatedly emphasized that in this type of knowledge, God is not known through the created being, but—on the contrary—the saint knows what is created by God only thanks to knowing God. This knowledge should indeed be described as knowledge *par excellence*, unforgettable knowledge, or knowledge in the truest sense of the word.[66]

2 The Knowledge of Experience

2.1 *The Most Complete Philosophy*

As previously mentioned, Maximus the Confessor has sharp words for the faith of the "know-it-alls" in logical procedures.[67] At the heart of this rejection lies the sober knowledge that the basic axioms of logical procedure are based on a belief typologically comparable to faith in the Divine. The crucial difference is that, in the case of logic, it concerns belief in the effects of contingent powers, hence this belief should rather be defined as superstition. The Divine Logos and divine truth stand high above any contingent truth. They are not opposed by any falsehood or untruth.

From this arises Maximus' teaching on the two kinds of philosophy. In one case, philosophy (including Christian philosophy) is meant in the disciplinary sense of the word, which is fundamentally a matter of natural reason. The approach of this philosophy towards truth occurs not through immediate cognition, but through slow progression via dividing methods (διαιρετικοὶ μεθόδοι).[68] It should be noted here that Maximus views division (διαίρεσις) as a negative analogue to difference (διαφορά), which differentiates and determines things, whereas division dissects and separates one from another.[69] Division is defined as complete dissection (τομή διαμπάξ) of the existence (ὕπαρξις) of each thing. These parts are separated and considered on their own, while difference preserves and expresses the how-being (τὸ πῶς εἶναι) of things.[70] Within the framework of this philosophy, propositions are presented as conjectures rather than as necessary proofs. It is entirely possible for the philosopher, against their will, to think imperfectly and incorrectly, and even—partially or entirely—undermine the truth. Here, truth can only be attained as a shadow or image of itself.

66 Ibid., 10, in: PG 91, 1152D–1156C.
67 Ibid., 16, in: PG 91, 1228A.
68 Ibid., 5, in: PG 91, 681B.
69 Ep., 12, in: PG 91, 469AB.
70 Opuscula theologica et polemica, 14, in: PG 91, 152C–153A.

In the second case, what is aimed for is the "divine philosophy" of the saints, which is more than philosophy in the disciplinary sense of the word. Because the "philosophy" of the saints encompasses contemplation, and therefore also noetic wisdom together with practice, it dignifies the nature of the body and is necessary (ἐξ ἀνάγκης) by virtue of the energies of the righteous intellect and correct reason. The perfect philosophy of the saints coincides with their wisdom. They possess wisdom as a stable inner state (ἕξις). Their wisdom is γνῶσις ἔμπρακτος and πρᾶξις ἔνσοφος, which is activated by the holy Spirit.[71] This wisdom contains and embraces all godlike and pious modes of knowledge and the mystical and natural principles (λόγοι), which encompass everything.[72] Although in the current mode of existence the wisdom accessible to man remains bound by economy, the wisdom of the saints is the level of knowledge of God attainable face to face with the absolute uncrossability of the boundary between man and God.[73]

The mode of cognition and knowledge of the "perfect philosophers" arises amidst theological experience, which has a personal character. The term "divine philosophy" (κατά Θεόν φιλοσοφία, θεία φιλοσοφία) or "most complete philosophy" (πληρεστάτη φιλοσοφία) should not simply be interpreted as "asceticism." It denotes living the divine life itself. This kind of cognition surpasses the human intellect's own power and energy. It is cognition through the divine natural energies, which are energies supernatural to the intellect-νοῦς. The νοῦς of the philosopher embroiled in passion is not capable of reaching or replacing the thinking of the theologically inspired man. Only from the perspective of "complete philosophy" can the homonymy in thought and expression be avoided, and a person become able to think and speak about being in its entirety.[74]

2.2 *Theological Philosophy*

In a strictly systematic way, Maximus the Confessor outlines the stages of ascent. Practice or practical philosophy is divided into five levels. Three are levels of natural philosophy, acting as a mediating link between practical and theological philosophy. Advancement in it terminates sensory relations to things and natural contemplation itself. In its highest levels, any proper activity of the

71 Ambigua ad Thomam (AmbTh), praefatio, in: PG 91, 1032A.

72 AmbIoh, 10, in: PG 91, 1136CD.

73 Ibid., 50, in: PG 91, 1368AB.

74 Ibid., 32, in: PG 91, 1281B–1285B. Cf. G. Kapriev, Weisheit und Philosophie in der Lehre des Maximus Confessor, in: *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiévales*, 85/1 (2018), 207–216.

intellect (κατά νοῦν ἐνέργεια) ceases. This occurs through the rejection of noetic symbolic contemplation as well and entry into the uniform and simple mystagogy of theological knowledge (θεολογικὴ ἐπιστήμη).

The most commonly used name for this stage is "mystical theology" (μυστικὴ θεολογία), but it is also called simply "theology," as well as theological mystagogy (θεολογικὴ μυσταγωγία),[75] theological philosophy, and theological wisdom (θεολογικὴ φιλοσοφία, θεολογικὴ σοφία)[76] or even theological grace (θεολογικὴ χάρις).[77] Theology is granted through divine grace. A human's own powers and achievements are not sufficient for its attainment. Theology is also occasionally defined as "knowledge" and "cognition," but not dependent on created beings, it is enlightenment knowledge, coming directly from the Trinity and therefore produced and activated not by the human νοῦς itself.[78]

The theological level is supernatural. It presupposes the radical rejection of relations with every figure, quantity, quality, time, and the whole order of created natures, not only by the senses and reason, but also by the intellect itself. It requires the intellect's refusal to perceive any representations, images, thoughts, or concepts. This state has nothing in common with discursive apophatics. It is a simple and inexpressible movement of the νοῦς around God.[79] The intellect frees itself from its own powers and energies to fully absorb the energies of Divinity, to exist in them, and to participate in God Himself. The supernatural and supermental light that fills the νοῦς is the "Sinaitic darkness," coinciding with the "Tabor Light," the rays of divine glory. It is precisely this which leads the spiritual person to transfiguration (μεταμόρφωσις) and deification (θέωσις).[80]

Theology is the apprehension and experiential probing (διὰ τοῦ παθεῖν πεῖρα) of Divinity. It constitutes a personal supra-intellectual experience, hence it is also called "ignorance."[81] This experience is characterized as "knowledge according to the activity" (κατ' ἐνέργειαν γνῶσις).[82] Theology is not an experiential acquaintance with the unknowable essence of God, but rather of the things περὶ αὐτόν, around God, among which infinity and limitlessness are often men-

75 Thal., 40, in: PG 90, 396C.
76 AmbIo, 37, in: PG 91, 1293B; AmbIo, 20, in: PG 91, 1240B.
77 Cf. L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator. The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, Lund 1965, 356.
78 AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1077B, 1088A; Thal., 22, in: PG 90, 320D–321A.
79 AmbIo, 10, in: PG 91, 1112D–1113A.
80 Myst., 21, in: PG 91, 697A; ThEc 1, 31, in: PG 90, 1094D–1096A; ThEc 1, 97, in: PG 90, 1124B.
81 ThPol, 1, in: PG 91, 9A); Thal, prol, in: PG 90, 248B.
82 Thal., 60, in: PG 90, 624A.

tioned.[83] The intellect enters a state defined only as an apparently paradoxical "eternally-moving rest" (ἀεκίνητος στάσις).[84] Maximus speaks of the completion, limit, and summit (πέρας), from which those transcending everything visible contemplate the world. With the eyes of the νοῦς they contemplate the one and uniform principle and acquire true, simple and total knowledge of being. It is knowledge of the *logoi* or the unifying principle, but also immediate knowledge of individual things in their truth, together with their properties and relations.[85]

Residing within this boundary is not yet presence in eternity. It is rather a preparation for entering it. It could be said to be existence in the aeon. Rest is achieved, resembling rest in the kingdom of God, without, however, being identical to it. This existence and this knowledge may be defined as a "limit experience": an experience of the world from its boundary, which should be interpreted as the point of contact with the Divine *par excellence*. This state should be defined as a pre-sensing, pre-tasting, and pre-existential experiencing of the future blessed life.

2.3 *Ecstasy and Deification*

The level of theology is reached through the complete cessation of one's own mental energies, that is, through total apophasis on the part of the human being. Through perfect self-apophasis, one achieves ecstasy, i.e., the perfect going-outside-of-oneself in order to be seized by the natural divine energy of Christ and be filled with it.[86]

The union of the soul with God occurs in ecstasy (ἔκστασις).[87] Ecstasy is the going beyond the limits of human nature, coinciding with the attainment of its purpose. It is not merely a radical leaving of contingent things and their relations, but also a total exodus from oneself.[88] Ecstasy does not only characterize the human being. It implies the loving egress of God beyond himself. Incarnation is the pattern in which the ecstatic character of every love is seen. Divin-

83 Cf. Char., 1, 100, in: PG 90, 984A.

84 Thal., 59, in: PG 90, 608D. Cf. W. Völker, *Maximus Confessor als Meister des geistlichen Lebens*, Wiesbaden 1965, 339–359; J.-C. Larchet, *La divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris 1996, 495–503; L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator. The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, Lund 1965, 339.

85 AmbIo, 45, in: PG 91, 1352BC.

86 AmbIo, 47, in: PG 91, 1360AD.

87 ThEc 1, 16, in: PG 90, 1089A. Cf. N. Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology. Maximus the Confessor's Eschatological Ontology of Being as Dialogical Reciprocity*, Brookline, Mass. 2010, 165–168.

88 AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1076C.

ity proceeds out from itself as love and eros, as ἀγάπη and ἔρως, and thereby attracts to itself anyone capable of receiving this energy.[89] God moves in such a way as to sow an internal disposition (σχέσις ἐνδιάθετος) of eros and love in those capable of receiving God. Ecstasy is the mutual orientation of God and humanity towards each other, without any merging between them. The highest union with God occurs in and through the strict difference between the created and the transcendent Divinity.

While love-ἀγάπη is rather an internal state, love-ἔρως, in the sense of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, is the going out of oneself towards union with the beloved, which is realized in ecstasy. The loving union is not a mixing of lovers, but a unification of their energies. Therefore, ecstasy is described as "passivity," "endurance," or "feeling" (πάσχειν). However, it nevertheless involves certain activity or movement by which the lover "enters" into the beloved. The triad of "noetic activity—love—movement" in its unity is decisive for the quality of every love. The love for material and physical things, however, is not motivated on the part of the *nous*. Therefore, it is capable of generating movement towards evil and leading to the dispersal of human integrity in the realm of contingency. Conversely, love for the good is salvific delimitation (περιγραφή) and therefore determination. In it, the God-loving person is embraced by the beloved and loving—the infinite—God. The human person is known in their entirety and exists in God and through Him.[90]

The freely desired departure (γνωμικὴ ἐκχώρεσις) of man from oneself to God is primarily the renunciation of the intellect's own powers and energies. However, the νοῦς, having withdrawn from its natural energies, is not destroyed or transformed into something else; it is entirely preserved, accepting the energies of the holy Spirit. It acts, but no longer with its own natural power and energy, but with the supernatural energy of Divinity acting within it.[91] The energy acting in God and the saints is one and the same.[92] Being with God in erotic ecstasy (κατ' ἐρωτικὴν ἔκστασιν) is participation in God, the experience of a state of divinization. Perfect divinization is directed towards the world to come, but in the experience of ecstasy, it is given here as well, although not to everyone.[93]

89 AmbIo, 23, in: PG 91, 1260C.

90 Cf. AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1073C–1076A.

91 Cf. AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1076C.

92 ThPol, 1, in: PG 91, 33A–36A.

93 Cf. H.U. v. Balthasar, *Kosmische Liturgie. Das Weltbild Maximus des Bekenners*, Einsiedeln ²1961, 90; P. Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua of St. Maximus the Confessor and his Refutation of Origenism*, Roma 1955, 135–136; L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator. The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, Lund 1965, 448–452; J.-C. Larchet, *La divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris 1996, 535–545.

In ecstasy, one not only attains knowledge of God but also becomes deified. In several places Maximus often speaks of deification as following knowledge (γνῶσις), where the νοῦς is shaped into the likeness of God through contemplation of the inexpressible.[94] The highest aim of the νοῦς is to become gracefully participant in God.[95] Grace does not operate without *gnosis*, without human movement towards practical elevation and knowledge.[96] Human volitional efforts are also required. In the foreground stand both the inseparable relationship between the will and reason and the importance of human freedom. Freedom and the way it is used are, according to Maximus, among the most important conditions for personal salvation. Nevertheless, human deification does not occur by nature or in relation, but by divine disposition and grace (κατὰ θέσιν καὶ χάριν). In it, God is both entirely incomprehensible (παντελῶς ἀκατάληπτος) and entirely known (τελείως γνωσθῇ) by the person.[97] This is the highest point that man in this world can reach in his cooperation with divine grace.

Deification (θέωσις) is a state higher than theology. It is supernatural in that it involves an inseparable participation in the energies of the divine nature. The deified man lives the life of God Himself.[98] The deified person is entirely deified, in the fullness of their logos, just as Christ has assumed the whole of humanity. Unlike the union of natures in Christ, however, the union of the individual with God is not hypostatic, but only through energy.[99] Deification encompasses both the soul and the body, which are penetrated in their respective ways by grace, directly uniting with the νοῦς.[100] In deification—bearing true pleasure (ἡδονή) for both soul and body—the individual remains entirely human in soul and body, by nature, and becomes entirely divine in soul and body, by grace.[101] This is being according to the *logos* of human nature but in a different mode of existence.[102] Natural specificity is preserved, but the boundaries of nature are existentially overcome.[103] In this state, the highest

94 Cf. e.g. Thal., 15, in: PG 90, 297D.

95 Thal., 25, in: PG 90, 333A.

96 Thal., 25, in: PG 90, 333A.

97 ThPol, 1, in: PG 91, 33C.

98 Thal., 59, in: PG 90, 608D; ThEc, 1, 54, in: PG 90, 1104AB; AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1088B.

99 V. Karayiannis, *Maxime le Confesseur: essence et énergies de Dieu*, Paris 1993, 472.

100 AmbIo, 42, in: PG 91, 1336A, 1341D; ThEc 2, 88, in: PG 90, 1168A.

101 AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1088BC. А.И. Брилліантов, *Влияние восточного богословия на западное в произведениях Іоанна Скота Эригены*, С.-Петербург 1898 [A.I. Brilliantov, *The Influence of Eastern Theology on the West in the Works of John Scottus Eriugena*, St. Petersburg 1898—Russian], 363.

102 Cf. AmbTh, 5, in: PG 91, 1056A.

103 Cf. Myst., 20, in: PG 91, 969CD; Св. Тутеков, *Добродетелта заради истината. Богословски и антропологични основи на аретологията*, Велико Търново 2009 [S. Toutekov,

self-identity of man is achieved in its entirety, overcoming any division and fragmentation of properties, abilities, and strengths. Deification is not given to everyone in the same measure. It is proportionate, according to each one's own measure (κατὰ τὴν ἑκάστου ἀναλογίαν), according to the worthiness of each of the deified.[104]

The term "deification" in Maximus the Confessor denotes both the process of deification and its complete attainment. The initial stages of the process are visible even in this life. However, the earthly mortality of the body is not overcome, but rather an entrance (εἴσοδος) is offered through which one may enter into incorruption. In this way, Maximus emphasizes that life in the kingdom of God is not a continuation of earthly life, whether perfected or sanctified, nor is it a restoration of paradisiacal existence. It is a way of life of an entirely different quality and with an entirely different set of characteristics.[105]

Perfect deification is attainable at the goal, with God, where there is a place of rest (στάσις). This rest is not only stability but also a movement beyond every movement. The concepts of "rest" and "movement" themselves are surpassed and overcome in God.[106] Therefore, Maximus speaks of rest in perpetual movement and movement in rest.[107] This is the movement of those at rest around God in the energies of God Himself. Maximus speaks of a δρόμος ἀεικίνητος,[108] of a constantly moving course. This movement is not a process taking place in time (which Maximus does not associate with the movements and changes of things). The movements of the deified in the future eon, connected with the eternal life of God, are independent of time.[109] The human being is deified in infinity; their deification knows no bounds.[110] Existential knowledge of God in the dynamics of mutual love progresses infinitely into eternity.[111]

Virtue for the Sake of Truth: The Theological and Anthropological Foundations of Aretology, Veliko Tarnovo 2009—Bulgarian], 78.

104 Maximus Confessor, Orationis Dominicae expositio (Pater), in: PG 90, 897A; AmbIo, 7, in: PG 91, 1073C, 1077B; AmbIo, 47, in: PG 91, 1360D.

105 Cf. AmbIo, 10, in: PG 91, 1157C.

106 H.U. v. Balthasar, *Kosmische Liturgie. Das Weltbild Maximus des Bekenners*, Einsiedeln ^{2}1961, 137.

107 Thal., 65, in: PG 90, 760A.

108 Thal., 17, in: PG 90, 304CD.

109 AmbIo, 10, in: PG 94, 1164B.

110 Thal., 22, in: PG 90, 320D. Cf. J.-C. Larchet, *La divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxrime le Confesseur*, Paris 1996, 545–674.

111 Cf. G. Kapriev, *Philosophie in* Byzanz, Würzburg 2005, 98–102; Г. Каприев, *Максим Изповедник. Въведение в мисловната му система* [G. Kapriev, *Maximus the Confessor: An Introduction to His System of Thought*, Sofia 2010—Bulgarian], София 2010, 246–256.

2.4 *Experience Cognition according to the Radical Representatives of the Theocentric Line*

The representatives of the profiled theocentric line, whose very beginning was set by Symeon the New Theologian, do not simply place mystical experience at the highest level of knowledge. They effectively ignore all other cognitive mechanisms. Simeon does not problematize the definitions of philosophy, nor does he object to Photius's positioning of speculative theology. It is precisely through these concepts that he thinks. Symeon wholly emphasizes the knowledge of God through and in the grace of the Holy Spirit, which should be essential knowledge of God and full knowledge in general. The spiritual teacher, filled with divine grace, is the only one who can be called "wise." He bears apostolic dignity and burns entirely in divine fire. He is wise, not through external sciences, but through the power of practice and experience, possessing the most accurate knowledge of spiritual matters.[112] If one does not attain them through experience (πείρᾳ), one cannot know them.[113]

Although he had not completely tasted the external sciences of reason, Simeon's disciple Nicetas Stethatos writes, he stood higher than any rhetorician and sage, reaching the heights of wisdom in divine matters as a truly wise man and theologian, knowing the dogmas. He multiplied the wisdom attained through tears and toil, thanks to which understanding (φρόνησις) was given to him. Into him came all the goods of eternal life and the countless riches of wisdom and knowledge.[114]

This is the ancient and original form and completeness (εἶδος καὶ ἀποτέλεσμα) of wisdom, Stethatos generalizes. Due to their final purification, the grace of the spirit coming from above inhabited ancient and faithful men, who philosophized from ancient times by virtue of the paternal philosophy propelling their thinking power (διάνοια). Most spiritual individuals attain this state, not through scientific progress and the perfect exercise of reason, but through the power of philosophy, which explores the structure of the soul, and through perfect asceticism and observance of virtues.[115]

Speculative theology is vehemently rebuked. Even knowing a myriad of external sciences (μορὰ τῶν ἔξω μαθημάτων) or compiling and writing beauti-

112 Simeon Novus Theologus, Catecheses, 22, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Catéchèses 11*, ed. B. Krivochéine (Sources Chrétiennes 104), Paris 1964, 390, 321–329.

113 Id., Hymni, 23, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Hymnes 16–40*, ed. J. Koder (Sources Chrétiennes 174), Paris 1971, 222, 517–520.

114 Niketas Stethatos, De libro hymnorum, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Hymnes 1–15*, ed. J. Koder (Sources Chrétiennes 156), Paris, 1969, 116, 109–118, 132.

115 Niketas Stethatos, De libro hymnorum, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Hymnes 1–15*, ed. J. Koder (Sources Chrétiennes 156), Paris, 1969, 120, 172–122, 181.

ful words will not benefit you, warns Simeon, when my God begins to judge all.[116] One not enlightened by the divine Spirit is not a teacher but a liar and deceiver because they do not possess true wisdom, that is, Jesus Christ.[117]

Symeon is probably the first to assert that the lifestyle advocated by him is not only a territory for monks. Spiritual practice can be a matter for the entire church community (τοῦ κοινοῦ λαοῦ).[118] With a life program so constructed, the arts and scientific knowledge are undoubtedly pushed into the background. Their existential significance is greatly diminished. Their value for the knowledge of God and their relation to the divine are practically reduced to zero.[119]

2.5 *The Rationalist Turn in Gregory Palamas*

Theocentric and anthropocentric lines shaping the context of philosophical debates after the end of the 10th century relativized the unity of human cognitive abilities. A striving to overcome this circumstance can be discerned in Gregory Palamas' cognitive program.

2.5.1 The Mystical Experiential Knowledge of God

Gregory Palamas, the theoretical systematizer of hesychasm, places experience at the foundation of knowledge. At a crucial point in his second letter to Barlaam, he insists that experience (ἐμπειρία) is at the foundation of all credible proof. Experience thereby contains, beyond all proofs, the principles (ἀρχαί) of all arts and knowledge.[120] This statement is all the more significant because the topic under consideration is the possibility of an apodictic syllogism concerning Divinity. Thus, it concerns a generalizing thesis that means knowledge about the contingent world as well as the Divinity.

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116 Hymni, 31, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Hymnes 16–40*, ed. J. Koder (Sources Chrétiennes 174), Paris 1971, 396, 153–157.

117 Tractatus moralia, 15, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Traités Théologiques et Étiques II*, ed. J. Darrouzès (Sources Chrétiennes 129), Paris 1967, 456, 186–458, 189.

118 Cf. Simeon Novus Theologus, Catecheses, 22, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Catéchèses II*, ed. B. Krivochéine (Sources Chrétiennes 104), Paris 1964, 374,129–135; 384,247–386,2; Id., Hymni, 33, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Hymnes 16–40*, ed. J. Koder (Sources chrétiennes 174), Paris 1971, 418, 83–85; Id., Tractatus moralia, 3, in: Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Traités Théologiques et Étiques II*, ed. J. Darrouzès (Sources Chrétiennes 129), Paris 1967, 430, 567–569.

119 Cf. G. Kapriev, Lehrer und Schüler in der geistlichen und geistigen Kultursituation von Byzanz, in: *Schüler und Meister* (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 39), eds. A. Speer, T. Jeschke, Berlin–Boston 2016, 411–413.

120 Gregorius Palamas, Ἐπιστολή Β' πρὸς Βαρλαάμ, in: *Ἰρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα*, τ. 1, επιμ. Π. Χρήστου, Θεσσαλονίκη 1962 (ed. Christou 1), 268, 8–10.

Palamas places the deification of humanity in this world at the center of the implications of his teaching on natural energies. He and the Palamites oppose the reduction of human cognitive faculties to rationality and advocate the possibility of knowledge of God through participation in Divinity, that is, the actuality of mystical experience, contemplation, and deification—the active togetherness of God and man. They identify divine natural energy with the Tabor light. According to their interpretation, at Mount Tabor, Christ manifests His divine essential energy, the outward manifestation of His divine essence, for the first and only time in His earthly life. Palamas insists there is a triple connection of the Son of God with human nature. Firstly, he mentions hypostatic union, the unity of Divinity and humanity in the hypostasis of the Word. Secondly, he indicates the Eucharist: the God-Man and the human become one mystical body. Thirdly, he points to divine enlightenment through the eternal light, in which those worthy of receiving the glory of the holy body partake. Without hesitation, Palamas presents all these unions with the Divinity of Christ as being filled with natural divine energies.[121,122] This transformation of existence does not have a substantial character. It is a consequence of perceiving divine life, the essential divine energy, that is, also called holy Spirit, in which the participant partakes—in his mind and body[123]—through participation.[124] Participation in essence is excluded. The unity of God and man can only occur to the extent that God does not lose His transcendence, and man does not lose his creatureliness.[125]

The saints participate in Divinity to the extent that they become godlike (θεοειδεῖς) themselves.[126] They are called instruments (or organs—ὄργανα) of the holy Spirit because they are filled with the same energy as Him, identical to that of the worshipping essence.[127] A complete energetic *perichoresis* flows

121 Gregorius Palamas, Triades, I, 3, 38, ed. Christou I, 449, 4–21. Cf. G. Podskalsky, Gottesschau und Inkarnation. Zur Bedeutung der Heilsgeschichte bei Gregorios Palamas, in: *Orientalia christiana periodica*, 35 (1969), 19.

122 Gregorius Palamas, Homilia 5, in: PG 151, 64D.

123 Gregorius Palamas, Triades, III, 1, 33, ed. Christou I, 644, 23–645, 5.

124 Cf. *Triades* II, 2, 12, ed. Christou, I, 518, 13–16; J. Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, New York 1974, 177; J. Meyendorff, *L'Église orthodoxe*, Paris ²1990, 167.

125 K. Savvidis, *Die Lehre von der Vergöttlichung des Menschen bei Maximos dem Bekenner und ihre Rezeption durch Gregorios Palamas*, St. Ottilien 1997, 186.

126 Theophanes, 30, ed. Christou II, 258, 19–23. Cf. G. Kapriev, Systemelemente des philosophisch-theologischen Denkens in Byzanz. Zum Dialog *Theophanes* des Gregorios Palamas, in: *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiévales*, 64/2 (1997), 272–274.

127 Triades, III, 1, 33 ed. Christou I, 645, 10–20; 646, 1–10; Contra Akindynon, I, 4, 6, in: Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα, vol. 3, eds. P. Christou et alii, Thessalonike 1970 (ed. Christou III), 42, 1–2; 8–10; Homiliae, 8, in: PG 151, 101D.

between them and God.[128] The deified one remains by nature entirely human, both spiritually and bodily, but becomes, in soul and body (which becomes Christ-like—χριστοειδεῖς),[129] divine by grace.[130]

Regarding divinization in this world, Palamas insists on its simultaneous reality and incompleteness. Even the saint himself, Palamas points out, cannot be invariably impeccable on earth. In this eon, light is not granted in its irreversible permanence and immutability.[131] The knowledge of God here is not final but rather given as a pledge (ἀρραβών) for the noetic light in its fullness.[132] The irreversible transformation occurs on the day of the resurrection of the dead, at the Last Judgment. Palamas even insists that in the hereafter there will be a constant movement towards perfect knowledge of God.[133] Continuing divinization arises not from any increase or intensification of divine grace but from the nature of human beings and their receptive capacities, filled with infinite divine energy in the human hypostasis.

When describing knowledge of God through natural divine energies, Palamas emphasizes positive existential experience (πεῖρα) and the immediate wise practice (πρᾶξις) of interacting with God,[134] which go beyond rational knowledge and intellect. Alongside this, he is also convinced that, in the knowledge of God, two are the eyes of the soul: They are two necessary realms of human knowledge. With one "eye" one sees in immediate contemplation the glory of the divine nature, while knowledge of beings leads to knowledge of God through mediated rational conclusions. Whereas the possession of the divine light in an immediate and, above all, elevating vision makes God himself visible, knowledge of the existent leads by mediated rational conclusions to knowledge about God.[135] From the triadic nature of the human soul two kinds of knowledge result: the natural (φυσική) and the spiritual (πνευματική), the first of which includes the purely human knowledge of being (γνῶσις τῶν ὄντων),[136] rational-discursive knowledge.

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128 De divinae et deificae participationis, 21, ed. Christou II, 156, 9–12; Contra Akindynon, III, 16, 15, ed. Christou III, 172, 3–24.

129 G. Podskalsky, Gottesschau und Inkarnation. Zur Bedeutung der Heilsgeschichte bei Gregorios Palamas, in: *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 35 (1969), 22–23.

130 Contra Akindynon, III, 6, 16, ed. Christou III, 173, 15–18.

131 Triades, I, 3, 49, ed. Christou I, 460, 8–17.

132 Triades, I, 3, 10, ed. Christou I, 420, 18–22.

133 Triades, II, 2, 11, ed. Christou I, 517, 13–18.

134 Triades, I, 3, 13; II, 1, 9, ed. Christou I, 423, 3–424, 2; 479, 24–473, 12.

135 *Triades*, II, 3, 15–17 ed. Christou I, 551, 4–554, 13; Contra Akindynon, I, 4, 6 ed. Christou III, 42, 1–2; Capita 150, 114, ed. Christou V, 98, 23–27.

136 Capita 150, 123, ed. Christou V, 104, 17–20.

2.5.2 The Knowledge of God by Virtue of Natural Human Reason

Regarding knowledge of God through natural human reason, Palamas asserts that everyone, including saints, first receives knowledge of God through observing beings. All, except saints, contemplate the grace, power, and wisdom inherent in the Creator only through creation,[137] through which they perceive creative divine energy.[138] Palamas draws attention to the fact that the divine light that imparts eternal life initially enters the soul through transient and visible things.[139]

Despite popular opinions, Palamas attaches great importance to sensory and rational cognition. In the context of his thesis that, through the triadic nature of knowledge, humans are more in the image of God than angels, he particularly emphasizes the significance of sensory knowledge naturally connected to rational and intellectual capacities inherent in humans but not in angels. Through this type of cognition, various arts, sciences, and human creativity in general become possible. Only humans are given the ability to create from nothing, though not from absolute nothingness (ἐκ μὴ ὄντον εἰ καὶ μὴ ἐκ μηδαμῶν ὄντον), by God.[140]

Natural knowledge is defined as "mixed knowledge" (σύμμικτος γνῶσις). It is knowledge of the intellect (νοῦς), in which imagination (φαντασία) and sensory cognition (κατ' τὴς αἰσθήσεις) necessarily participate.[141] Knowledge is formed by the senses through bodies, not simply from their corporeality, but from the forms associated with bodies (ἐκ κατὰ τὰ σόματα εἰδῶν),[142] while imagination mediates between sensory and noetic knowledge.[143] Therefore, this knowledge encompasses only that which does not exceed the limits of creaturely intellect and discursive reason in any way.

With regard to the knowledge of God, Palamas distinguishes experiential theology from theology understood within the narrower prevailing concept defining it as discursive knowledge of the divine. Compared to contemplation, theology is closer to philosophical knowledge. It does not depart from the realm of words, of logical discourse,[144] and discursive knowledge is defined by Pala-

137 Theophanes, 27; 30; 32, ed. Christou II, 255, 14–17; 258, 17–20; 260, 10–13; Triades, II, 3, 71, ed. Christou I, 604, 4–21.
138 Capita 150, 150, ed. Christou V, 119, 11–12.
139 Cf. Capita 150, 18, ed. Christou V, 45, 20–23.
140 Capita 150, 63, ed. Christou V, 71, 24–32.
141 Capita 150, 19; 20, ed. Christou V, 45, 24–26; 46, 13–14.
142 Capita 150, 15, ed. Christou V, 44, 23–28.
143 Capita 150, 17, ed. Christou V, 45, 7–8.
144 Epistula I ad Barlaam, 52, ed. Christou I, 290, 5–28; Triades, I, 3, 42, ed. Christou I, 453, 8–9.

mas as the power that connects the intellect with creation.[145] Palamas is not unfamiliar with the understanding that philosophy encompasses all rational-discursive knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), but he also formulates it more narrowly. He emphasizes that philosophy is beneficial for sharpening the eye of the soul. It provides true knowledge of being as being and is capable of discovering its actual laws. In both cases, it is perceived as a possible instrument for achieving the salvific truth of the holy Spirit.[146]

Palamas confidently asserts that every being can be classified according to essence under the ten Aristotelian categories, while God, who is a super-essential essence, can only be considered through relation (τὸ πρός τί) and creative action (τὸ ποιεῖν).[147] While positions, states, places, and times can only be metaphorically attributed to God, ποιεῖν and ἐνεργεῖν can be truly predicated only of God.[148] With creation and essential action, two different kinds of divine activity are meant here. It concerns the creative and deifying energy of God in their orientation towards creation.

Palamas distinguishes discursive philosophy from wisdom given as a spiritual gift (πνευματικόν δῶρον), in which the true philosopher[149] is educated through experience.[150] He knows God in God (ἐν θεῷ θεόν)[151] and proclaims his testimony to this experience. But discursive philosophy is also a gift from the Creator: a natural (φυσικόν) and therefore universally accessible gift given to us in order to free ourselves from tormenting ignorance.[152] Through it, humans know God as the cause of beings. In this way, they know Him only indirectly, as one knows art in the works of art.[153] But this very gift from God is the condition and basis of all knowledge.[154]

2.5.3 The Normative Power of Pious Reason

In his Δεκάλογος τῆς κατὰ Χριστὸν νομοθεσίας ἤτοι τῆς νέας διαθήκης (*Decalogue of the law according to Christ, namely the New Testament*), written around 1355,

145 Triades, II, 3, 48, ed. Christou I, 581, 31–32.
146 Triades, II, 1, 7; II, 1, 42, ed. Christou I, 471, 5–7; 503, 24–504, 13. Capita 150, 123, ed. Christou V, 104, 21.
147 Capita 150, 134, ed. Christou V, 110, 23–31.
148 Capita 150, 133, ed. Christou V, 110, 10–12.
149 Triades, I, 1, 17, ed. Christou I, 380, 9.
150 Theophanes, 32, ed. Christou II, 260, 14–16.
151 Triades, II, 3, 12, ed. Christou I, 690, 26–27.
152 Triades I, 1, 22; II, 1, 12, ed. Christou I, 385, 29–30; 474, 25–28.
153 Triades, II, 3, 67; II, 3, 71; III, 1, 33, ed. Christou I, 600, 12–24; 604, 4–10; 644, 23–645, 2.
154 Triades, II, 3, 42; III, 1, 30, ed. Christou I, 575, 29–576, 4; 642, 10–12. Cf. G. Kapriev, Der Begriff „Erfahrung" bei Gregorios Palamas, in: *Quaestio*, 4 (2004), 137–147.

Palamas associates divine legislation exclusively with the pious way of life, that is, with the realm of ethics and practice. The problem of knowledge and even the problem of knowing God are not discussed at all. The domain of knowledge and discourse is tacitly subsumed under the banner of conduct. That God gives the strength to do His will to those who do not forget God's commandments and follow them is emphasized.[155] If humans observe the commandments for righteous living and live by them, they build "the treasure of piety" (τῆς εὐσεβείας θησαυρός)[156] in their soul.

The discursive knowledge of God and beings obviously does not directly relate to this way of life. Palamas rejects the thesis that a person can become capable of participating in perfection and goodness by achieving true insights into beings, which would be accomplished through the power of discernment, syllogisms, and analyses; that one striving for perfection and goodness must necessarily study the relevant methods with the help of external sciences (παρὰ τῆς ἔξω παιδείας) and apply them perfectly.[157] Conversely, Palamas calls "true insight" (δόξα ἀληθῆ), not the knowledge gained through words and syllogisms, but the knowledge manifested through deeds and life (δι' ἔργων καὶ βίου ἀποδεικνυμένη). Palamas asserts his favorite skeptical thesis here as well: Against every word, another word contends (λόγῳ παλαίει πᾶς λόγος). But which word, he asks emphatically, contends with life?[158]

However, what about the situation when a person confronts one λόγος with some other λόγος, as Palamas himself denotes his polemical writing activity and the domain of verbal and written discourse in general?[159] Discourse, including theological discourse, is obviously not an element of perfection, understood as the state of deification in this life. Nevertheless, Palamas does note the relationship between the pious life according to God's law and philosophical-theological discourse. Self-knowledge, as well as the proper use of the methods of *diairesis*, syllogistics, and analysis, presuppose the transformation of one's own νοῦς into one that is non-arrogant and non-evil, he insists, a transformation that can be achieved through intense repentance (or change of intellect) and rigorous asceticism (δι' ἐπιπόνου μετανοίας καὶ ἀσκήσεως συντόνου).[160]

Regarding discourse, it is instructively stated that preparation for its successful use (where this process is based on divine legislation) is the condition for

155 Decalogus, 1, ed. Christou V, 251, 14–17.
156 Ibid., 10, ed. Christou V, 260, 12–13.
157 Triades, 1, 3, 13, ed. Christou I, 423, 10–18.
158 Ibid., ed. Christou I, 423, 23–28.
159 Ibid., 2, 1, 14, ed. Christou I, 477, 8–9.
160 Ibid., 1, 3, 13, ed. Christou I, 423, 28–424, 2.

the possibility of the flawless use of reason. However, it is not an integral part of discourse, where structuring divine legislation does not have an immediate constitutive power over the activity of reason. Symptomatically, in his discursive expositions, Palamas uses mystical experience, which, he emphasizes, is true knowledge of God, illustratively at best, but not as an explicit evidential basis. The effect of divine law in the realm of the discursive is conceived of as mediated. Only semingly paradoxically, this leads to the attribution of an autonomous constitutive and regulatory foundation for the rational-discursive dimension.

In his dialogue *Theophanes*, written most likely in 1343, Palamas promises to present the deep root, the reason for the correctness or incorrectness of all statements regarding God (περὶ θεοῦ δογμάτων). He formulates a norm of piety (γνώμων τῆς εὐσεβείας) for discursive knowledge, which corresponds to the structure of the human mind.[161]

The established norm of piety of reason should regulate discursive theology. The norm of discursive knowledge is in accordance with the structure of natural human reason. It requires strict adherence to Christian dogmas, definitively excluding the hypothesis of contradictions in the dogmatic system.[162] It also requires the uncompromising application of logical laws[163] and resolute exclusion of terminological homonymy.[164] Based on this norm, Palamas dares to establish an "arbitrage of dogmas" (γνώμων τινα δογμάτων), through which correct statements can be distinguished from incorrect statements.[165] He declares his assurance that, through this rule, he can experience the truth of all propositions and provide testimony (τεκμήριον) and necessary proof (ἀπόδειξις) for the truth he proclaims.[166] He claims to be able not only to show and interpret but also to investigate and prove.[167]

Against this background, it should come as no surprise that Palamas' first theoretical writings are precisely the two *Apodictic Treatises* (Λόγοι ἀποδεικτικοὶ δύο),[168] in which (as well as in the related correspondence with Barlaam and Acindynus[169]) the possibility of deducing apodictic syllogisms regarding Divinity is affirmed. Indeed, he deviates from Aristotle's doctrine of the syllogism

161 Ibid., 10; 13, ed. Christou II, 233, 23; 238, 11–12.
162 Ibid., 13, ed. Christou II, 238, 11–17.
163 Ibid., 3; 22, ed. Christou II, 223, 13–15; 248, 26–249, 9.
164 Ibid., 28, ed. Christou II, 256, 5–7.
165 Ibid., 3, ed. Christou II, 223, 2.
166 Ibid., 3, ed. Christou II, 223, 3–9.
167 Ibid., 13, ed. Christou II, 236, 23–26.
168 Ed. Christou I, 19–153.
169 Ed. Christou I, 200–312.

on several points, the basis for which are the differing metaphysical positions of Palamas and Byzantine philosophy from Aristotelian metaphysics. First and foremost, it concerns the fundamental differentiation between essence, existence, and being, which is not valid for Aristotelian metaphysics.[170] From this metaphysical horizon, Palamas insists that essence remains unknowable in every respect, while the existence and uniqueness of God are demonstrable through theological syllogisms having necessary validity.[171]

The common terms and axioms of theological apodictic syllogism must, therefore, differ from the usual products of human reason. The beginning and first assumption of this syllogism should be the unwavering principles of Holy Scripture, Christian dogmas, and the corresponding statements of the Church Fathers, from which necessarily valid conclusions can be derived.[172] Accordingly, Palamas firmly believes that, by following the action of the cognitive norm and using the rule, he can produce assertions that are fully consistent with religious dogmas and the theology of the holy Fathers.[173] This procedure allows him to expand the axiomatic basis of speculative theology and philosophy beyond the boundaries of dogmatics *par excellence*. In so doing, he allows himself to regard as axiomatically valid some theologoumena not previously affirmed by any council and to act as a legislator in the discursive theology of his time.

Particularly significant in this regard are his writings written before 1351 and even before 1347. In 1347 a synod of the Church of Constantinople generally accepted the orthodoxy of Palamite thought and its agreement with the teaching of the Church. In 1351, the council convened by the Synod of Constantinople explicitly affirmed the theological legitimacy of Palamite doctrine on the energies for the first time (adopting as its own document the *Tomos* composed by Neilus Kabasilas and Philotheus Kokkinus) and established it as a "standard of Orthodoxy."[174] The later statements of Palamas have the right to invoke this decision, but not the earlier ones. Accusations against his opponents of κακο-

170 Cf. И. Христов, Битие и съществуване в дискусията за метода между св. Григорий Палама и Варлаам, в: *Хуманизъм, култура, религия*, изд. И. Христов и др., София 1997 [I. Christov, Being and Existence in the Methodological Discourse between St. Gregory Palamas and Barlaam, in: *Humanism, Culture, Religion*, ed. I. Christov, Sofia 1997—Bulgarian], 37–48.

171 Cf. Gregorius Palamas, Ἐπιστολή Α' πρὸς Ἀκίνδυνον, 8, ed. Christou I, 211, 26–212, 19.

172 Cf. Ibid., 8; 10; 11, ed. Christou I, 211, 7; 214, 29; 215, 3–17.

173 Gregorius Palamas, Dialogus cum Gregora, 4 ed. Christou V, 195, 12–23.

174 Cf. И. Христов, *Византийското богословие през XIV в. Дискурсът за божествените енергии*, София 2016 [I. Christov, *Byzantine Theology in the 14th Century: The Discourse on Divine Energies*, Sofia 2016—Bulgarian], 119–141.

δοξία and a tendency towards heresy could be attributed to rhetorical peculiarities in polemics in Byzantium. However, Palamas' actual claims were much higher.

They are almost directly expressed in his work Περὶ θείας καὶ θεοποιοῦ μεθέξεως (*On Divine and God-making Participation*), appearing in 1341–1342.[175] Faith precedes Christian dogmas, he writes, not some proof (ἀπόδειξις). However, dogmas are ultimately discursively formulated and require their discursive defense and explanation. Therefore, according to Palamas in the context of his thesis, anyone who consistently interprets the dogmas syllogistically and wishes to deduce necessary consequences based on the dogmas must be in perfect συμφωνία with the saints and their propositions.[176] The evidential procedure is not rooted in faith itself and therefore not in the ground of the dogmas but is a product of human intellect based on the dogmas. The epistemic "norm of piety" demands precisely flawless agreement with the assertions of the Fathers, with the dogmas and with Holy Scripture, in order for the deduction of necessarily valid and therefore dogmatic truths to become possible through the power of the intellect. Based on this, Palamas says that God is the one who gives the λόγος in "opening our mouth" (ἐν ἀνοίξει τοῦ στόματος ἡμῶν), but speaking for the sake of truth, the flow of true discourse is a personal matter of the speaker and thinker, which often clashes with the opinion of the majority and therefore deserves personal praise.[177] With the same justification, the speech of those who oppose speaking truly to the truth is qualified not necessarily as "faithless" but certainly as "ἀσύνετος" (i.e., lacking in intellectual insight)—its producers are "ἀσυνέτως λέγοντες", "speaking unintelligently."[178] From this perspective, Palamas allows himself to attribute apostasy from Orthodoxy to those who contradict the central theses of his theological system, derived through the "norm of piety," since he understands their positions as being directly refuted by the dogmatic basis.

Even more decisive is this move in his *Symbol of Faith* (*Ὁμολογία πίστεως*), most probably written in 1347 on the occasion of his episcopal consecration. In it, Palamas dares to include the teaching on energies in the dogmatic basis in the form in which he interprets it. As expected, the Confession begins with a triadological exposition. After presenting the Orthodox dogmatic understanding of the Father and the Son (with an appropriate Christological exposition), the Holy Spirit is addressed as a divine Person and Paraclete. After noting that the

175 De divinae et deificae participationis, ed. Christou, II, 137–163.
176 Cf. De divinae et deificae participationis, ed. Christou, II, 137, 9–12.
177 Theophanes, 33, ed. Christou II, 262, 23–30.
178 Ibid., ed. Christou II, 262, 15.

procession and manifestation of the Paraclete, who appears not in essence but according to grace, power, and energy, is the work (ἔργον) of the entire Trinity, Palamas continues his exposition by stating that not only the supra-essential essence but also grace, power, energy, splendor, kingdom, immutability, and indeed everything in which angels and humans participate in God is common to the entire Trinity. In the following sentences, Palamas articulates the main tenets of his interpretation of the teaching on energies, decisively rejecting any composition of the Godhead resulting from the multiplicity of powers and energies.[179]

In the last paragraph of the *Symbol*, after mentioning the seven Ecumenical Councils, Palamas emphasizes that he honors both the Ecumenical Councils and the local councils, which affirmed piety and the evangelical way of life (εὐσεβεία καὶ εὐαγγελικὴ πολιτεία). Further on, however, he speaks only of the synod of 1341, which censured Barlaam and Acindynus. Moreover, he does not cite the decisions of the council but presents his own interpretation of their teaching (as if Barlaam and Acindynus had developed some kind of common doctrine) and refers to the *Tomos agioretikos* written by him and signed by the abbots of Athos.[180] This step is necessary precisely because the synod of 1341 only confirmed the *Tomos* in principle. It condemned as blasphemy Barlaam's accusations against the hesychastic monks because of their prayer practice and vision of the Tabor light, forbidding further discussion of these issues. At that time, there was no specific conciliar sanction on Palamite energy doctrine. In his *Symbol of Faith*, therefore, Palamas introduces his doctrine, developed on the basis of the norm of piety, as a dogmatic truth, regardless of the fact that it still lacks categorical ecclesiastical recognition and could not yet be regarded as a dogmatic teaching, as would be seen from the events that followed.

As mentioned earlier, the proposed mediation of the action of God's law in the realm of the intellectual and rational, as introduced by Gregory Palamas through the function of the epistemic "norm of piety," has a cultural-historical basis. The state of theology at the time of Palamas presupposes uncertainty around a pious and even holy way of life directly guaranteeing correct theological discourse. The fund of speculative theology has become too large and subtle. Its mastery required intellectual dexterity, exercise, and practice. The self-evidence of the identity between true and right thinking was seriously shaken. Palamas himself declares himself to be the lawyer of the hesychasts, taking account of the fact that most of his heroes are unable to present their

179 Gregorius Palamas, Confessio fidei, in: PG 151, 766AC.
180 Ibid., 768BC.

position in a theologically adequate way. Although he practices hesychastic psychosomatic practice himself, he never directly refers to it in his discursive expositions.

Even against this backdrop, Palamas's move should be evaluated as radically bold and innovative. From a systematic-theological perspective, the equating of intellectually produced theologoumena with dogmatic positions seems at best suspicious. The epithet "new theologian" (always pejorative in the Byzantine tradition—initially, and in the case of Simeon the New Theologian), constantly attributed to Palamas by Acindynus, is not entirely unfounded. It thereby primarily concerns Palamas's methodology, and its content only secondarily, if at all.

Gregory Palamas establishes a broadly autonomous constitution of theological reason. The mystical or theological experience, defined by Palamas as true knowledge of God, is immediately non-articulable discursively. It cannot be designated as either "irrational" or "rational" precisely because it is suprarational and does not directly relate to the activity of reason. It runs beyond reason and intellect. In the field of theological discourse, however, Palamas delegates extensive powers to the "pious intellect" and "pious reason," unusual for his predecessors from the theocentric line in Byzantine philosophy, and introduces substantial corrections to this paradigm.[181]

181 Cf. G. Kapriev, Die göttliche Gesetzgebung und die Norm der Erkenntnis gemäß Gregorios Palamas, in: *Das Gesetz—The Law—La Loi* (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 38), eds. A. Speer, G. Guldentop, Berlin–New York 2014, 431–436.

CHAPTER 6

Will and Freedom

In 529, the decidedly Augustinian Second Synod of Orange, chaired by Bishop Caesarius of Arles, condemned John Cassian's teaching on the will, classifying it as semi-Pelagian. Eastern churches did not accept the synodal decisions; the grounds for this condemnation do not affect Cassian's doctrine. At the same time, it is clear that John differs significantly from the late Augustine, thereby opening up more room for human freedom.

1 John Cassian's Doctrine of Freedom

Born in Scythia Minor (modern-day Dobrudja), John Cassian (c. 360–435) was a monk in Palestine and Egypt. Around 400 he became a disciple of John Chrysostom in Constantinople and was ordained a deacon by him. Shortly thereafter, he moved west and founded two monasteries near Marseille around 415. His monastic rules and spiritual teachings played an important role both in the West and in the East. His work *De incarnatione Christi contra Nestorium*, written around 430 at the request of the future Pope Leo I, served as the basis for the Pope's position in Christological debates over the following decades.

Cassian rejects interpreting our given freedom as captivity.[1] He emphasizes that "God activates within us everything that is simultaneously a matter of the free human will (*liberum arbitrium*)".[2] In comparison to Augustine, he relativizes the total role of grace on the path to salvation.

In his *Liber de dono perseverantiae*, Augustine insists that even persevering in faith is a work of God's grace and is not given to us based on our merits.[3] The extended interpretation of the concept of "*meritum*" leads to a depreciation of human freedom and a denial of any independent role for the human will in the salvific process. This is a tendency, prevalent especially in this work and in *De praedestinatione sanctorum*. It implies that when we desire, God activates and exercises His will in us. We will be activated (*operamur*); God

1 Johannes Cassian, Collationes patrum, XIII, 18, in: PL 49, 946B.

2 Ibid., in: PL 49, 946BC.

3 Augustinus, Liber de dono perseverantiae, XIII, 32, in: PL 45, 1012.

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will act with His good will and will be activated (*operatur et operari*) in us.[4] Cassian does not go so far.[5]

God, who desires humanity to live eternally and be saved, preserves us with all His goodness and with His spirit kindles a small spark of good will (*quantulacumque scintila bonae voluntatis*) shining within us.[6] Although God Himself has ignited this spark from the flint of our hearts,[7] human will preserves its autonomy. This explains the fact that our prayers are often heard later, or not at all, when we ask for something harmful, while at other times the "well-meaning healer" gives us what we consider harmful, but which is to our benefit, even against our own will.[8] The distinction between "our will" and "will of God" confirms their consideration as autonomous instances. Even if the faintest inkling of good human will emerges, God enlightens the will, strengthens it, and leads it toward goodness. Thus, He causes what He Himself has planted to grow. God not only accompanies His creation but also precedes it in His *providentia*.[9]

Through his examinations God tests the strength of human will when making decisions (*virtus humani arbitrii*). Grace does not protector the victor over the perfidious enemy in a way that leaves no room for the manifestation of human virtue.[10] Surely there would be no praise and merit (*laus ac meritum*) if Christ had distinguished in the centurion what He Himself had given him, reflects Cassian on Christ's words in Matth. 8, 5–13.[11] Otherwise, he would have said, "I have not given such faith to Israel."[12] By testing faith, God leaves room for the free decision of the will (*liberum arbitrium*).[13] He sets in motion the freedom of the volitional decision, accepting grace.[14] God's grace sets the free will in motion in such a way that, not only does it protect and defend man, it also enables him to fight against his spiritual enemies, relying on his own efforts (*proprii eum conatuus*).[15]

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4 Ibid., XIII, 33, in: PL 45, 1013.

5 Cf. T. (Γ.) Χαλκιᾶς, Εισαγογή, in: Ἰωάννης Κασσιανός, *Ἀσκητικὰ συγγράμματα*, file: ///C:/Users/project/Downloads/49298277.pdf, 11–20; Λ. Κατσίρα, Ὁ Ἰωάννης Κασσιανὸς καὶ οἱ θεωρίες τῶν Αὐγουστίνου καὶ Πελαγίου, in: *Θεολογία*, 4 (2019), 245–261.

6 Johannes Cassianus, Collationes patrum, XIII, 7, in: PL 49, 908BC.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., in: PL 49, 910A.

9 Ibid., in: PL 49, 8, 912A–913A.

10 Ibid., in: PL 49, 14, 934A–935A.

11 Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.

12 Ibid., in: PL 49, 936A.

13 Ibid., in: PL 49, 937B.

14 Ibid., in: PL 49, 937C.

15 Ibid., in: PL 49, 938B.

Cassian fights on two fronts, Thomas Sartori notes. Against the Pelagians he proves that God's grace is indeed the A and Ω of the entire moral struggle. That God not only grants victory in the end, but that the battle itself is already a gift. On the other hand, he disputes claims, including those of Augustine, which could be understood by lazy Christians to mean that one could fold their hands and leave everything to God's grace.[16] When it comes to beneficence, Cassian emphasizes both the autonomy of the human will and its free choice, as well as the interaction of this will with the will and grace of God. The advantage is always on God's side. The Heavenly Father of all knows whom He still needs to carry in the hands of His grace and to whom He can grant the exercise of virtue before God's eyes by means of the choices made by free will. In any case, God helps the one who strives, hears the one who calls, does not forsake the one who seeks, and rescues from danger even the one who is unaware.[17] However, the one who strives, calls, and seeks must pray for God's gift and use it effectively.

Cassian formulates his position in three sentences. First: when a person is inspired to pursue what is good, there is always a gracious gift from God—but in such a way that the freedom of decision of the will (*liberae voluntatis arbitrium*) should not be forced to lean in one direction or another. Secondly: it is also a gracious gift of God when we practice virtue—without thereby extinguishing our own freedom of decision. Thirdly: it is again a gift of God when someone perseveres in the virtue they have acquired—however, the freedom gifted to us does not sense any imprisonment (*captivitas*). Therefore, we must firmly believe, Cassian concludes, that God moves everything in the universe, that He both provides the beginning and strengthens and preserves what has been begun—without divesting us of the freedom of choice, which He Himself has given us.[18]

The famous *Collatio* 13 is by no means the only text by Cassian in which this position is defended. It can actually be found in all of his works. It passes through chapters 12–22 of *Collatio* 3, as well as *De incarnatione Domini* (especially in Book I, Chapter 3 and Book V, Chapter 1) and is elaborated in detail in Book 12 of *De coenobiorum institutis*. It is asserted unequivocally there that perfection cannot be attained without human effort, but also that it cannot be

16 T. Sartory, Introduction, in: Johannes Cassian, *Ruhe der Seele*, übers. Thomas Sartory, Freiburg im Br. 1984, 14.

17 Johannes Cassianus, Collationes patrum, XIII, 14, in: PL 49, 939AB.

18 Ibid., 18, in: PL 49, 946AB. Cf. D.J. MacQueen, John Cassian on Grace and Free Will with Particular Reference to Institutio XIII and Collatio XII, in: *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, 44 (1977), 5–28.

achieved by anyone solely through their own efforts, without God's grace.[19] Furthermore: God has created all of us as rational beings and endowed us with the power of free choice (*liberi arbitrii potestati donavit*). He acts alongside us so that we can overcome the sins of the flesh. He guides our free will, which easily inclines towards sin, towards a better outcome.[20]

The main thesis therefore states that free will is an autonomous power of the rational human being, which depends on him. It acts together precisely with God's grace when it comes to achieving something good. Cassian particularly emphasizes the guiding role of Divine providence-*providentia*, rejecting the idea of predestination in all its forms, without even mentioning it once. His position has its prehistory as well as a long subsequent tradition.

2 The Cappadocians

The Cappadocians articulate freedom as a constitutive peculiarity of humanity, insofar as they perceive man to be an image of God. Gregory the Theologian reflects that God has dignified humanity by bestowing autonomous free willpower (αὐτεξούσιον) upon it, thereby granting benefits to man no less than to the one who initially sowed the seeds of good.[21] Gregory of Nyssa, unfolding the anthropological doctrine of the Cappadocians, says it even more emphatically. The peculiarity of man is his God-image. The consequence of this is that every good, including the concept of beauty, virtue, and wisdom, is represented within humanity. Gregory emphasizes the necessity for the image of God to possess freedom, ensuring that it is not subject to natural domination (δυναστεία). Man must have an autonomous attitude of will (γνώμη) corresponding to his rational faculties. Virtue, he asserts, is inherently voluntary (ἀδέσποτος) and cannot be coerced. Anything forced or involuntary cannot be considered virtuous.[22] In his dialogue *Macrina*, Gregory articulates a similar perspective, suggesting that if sin-inducing necessities were ingrained in human nature, then the Creator would be the cause of evil. The movements of the soul become either aids to virtue or vices based on the choices of our free will (προαίρεσις).[23] The "abyss" (χάσμα) described in the Gospel arises from a judgment (κρίσις) that

19 Johannes Cassianus, De coenobiorum institutis, XII, 14, in: PG 49, 444A.

20 Ibid., 18, in: PL 49, 455A–456A.

21 Gregorius Nazianzenus, Oratio 45, 8, in: PG 36, 632C.

22 Gregorius Nyssenus, De opificio hominis, 16, in: PG 44, 184B.

23 Gregorius Nyssenus, De ainma et resurrectione dialogus qui inscribitur Macrina, in: PG 46, 61A.

divides opposing choices of the will in this life.[24] Gregory emphasizes that evil lacks an essence outside the decision of the will. Once a will aligns with God, evil is inevitably annihilated, as there will be nothing left to receive it.[25]

3 Nemesius of Emesa

Gregory of Nyssa's ideas find continuation in the Byzantine "Anthropology Textbook," namely in the work *De natura hominis* of Nemesius of Emesa. Nemesius was closely related to the Cappadocians not only biographically but also doctrinally. The book is widely referenced by Maximus the Confessor and sometimes cited under the author's name. Anastasius of Sinai mentions him again by name. John of Damascus borrows extensive passages from the work without naming its author. Subsequently, the work was often attributed to Gregory of Nyssa. The first Latin translations, the work of Alphanus of Salerno around 1080 and Burgundio of Pisa around 1165, also recommend it as a book by Gregory. This identification contributes to the widespread dissemination and exceptional authority of *De natura hominis*.[26]

Nemesius extensively discusses human free will in connection with questions of fate and providence. First, he describes the sphere of competence of the voluntary (ἐκούσιον). The areas of what happens through nature or under compulsion (βία), as well as the necessary and the unknown, remain outside it. They are defined as fields of the involuntary (ἀκούσιον), i.e. of the exclusion of the effect of human free will. The domain of volitional freedom is what depends on us (ἐν τοῖς ἐφ' ἡμῖν), and its realization has no clear limit, i.e., it belongs to the sphere of the possible. Ἐκούσιον is that which has its principle (ἀρχή) in the acting itself (ἐν αὐτῷ), knowing the individual options for how the action (πρᾶξις) could be carried out.[27] Every action, carried out according to reason (λογισμός) and free voluntary decision (προαίρεσις), by its own inclination and disposition, stems from free will.[28]

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24 Ibid., in: PG 46, 84B.

25 Ibid., in: PG 46, 101A.

26 On Nemesius of Emesa, the structure of his doctrine of the will, and the possible Hellenic sources of his concepts, see M. Streck, *Das schönste Gut: Der menschliche Wille bei Nemesius von Emesa und Gregor von Nyssa*, Göttingen 2005, 18–121. Cf. М.Л. Хорьков, Немезий Эмесский и его сочинение „О природе человека", в: Немезий Эмесский, *О природе человека*, Москва 1998 [M.L. Khorkov, Nemesius of Emesa and His Work 'On the Nature of Man', in: Nemesius of Emesa, *On the Nature of Man*, Moscow 1998—Russian], 451–456.

27 Nemesius Emesenus, De natura hominis, 32, in: PG 40, 728B. Cf. Ibid., 34, 757AC; Ibid., 34, 740B–741A.

28 Ibid., 32, in: PG 40, 729B.

The concept of free voluntary decisions (προαίρεσις) is determined even more narrowly than the concept of the voluntary. The capacity for willing (βούλησις) pertains to the goal, while προαίρεσις is related to what leads to the goal. Added to this is the fact that the capacity for willing extends to areas beyond human capabilities, while free choice is directed only towards what is achievable for us. This decision necessarily involves rational deliberation but cannot be reduced to opinion (δόξα). It can be determined as true or false, whereas free decisions cannot be judged in this way. Opinion pertains to the general, while free decisions pertain to the particular.[29]

The foundation of the voluntary and of free volitional decision is free will, self-power (τὸ αὐτεξούσιον). It has its place outside the sphere of the eternal, the necessary, the natural, the immutable, pure chance, and the realms of that which happens by itself (αὐτόματον). God has created man autonomous, i.e., with free will, so that the active and acting human being can be the origin of his own deeds. Free will is necessarily related to the rational capacity (τὸ λογικόν): every rational nature is necessarily αὐτεξούσιος, self-acting. Reason and free will are associated with the transformation and change characteristic of creation and with what depends on us: the rational man is the master of his actions (κύριος πράξεων). Due to his natural mutability, man possesses powers (δυνάμεις) subject to change, through which he exercises his free voluntary decision. It is not God but man who bears the blame for his evil. The energies, i.e., the activities producing virtues or vices, come from man himself. These actions are not directly a continuation of the powers (δυνάμεις—faculties, abilities) belonging to human nature. They are derived through those dispositions, ἕξεις, which in turn are formed in the exercise of προαίρεσις. The ἕξεις come forth from us, through us, and because of us. They are conceived of as stable inner states or personal attitudes. Nemesius describes ἕξις as φύσις ἐπίκτητος, a nature acquired, which is ἐφ' ἡμῖν, dependent on us, because it is acquired through learning and habit (μάθησις καὶ ἔθος) and is therefore secondary compared to what is immediately natural. It is within man's power to overcome even an adverse physical state (κράσις σώματος) through his free will or to choose what is rotten and evil. Thus, it depends on us, on our ἕξεις and our free decisions, whether we are worthy or unworthy, evil or good. Free will decision is subject to judgment because of virtuous or vicious action, because both virtues and vices stem from us.[30]

29 Ibid., 33, in: PG 40, 732A–733B.

30 Ibid., 39–41, in: PG 40, 761A–780B.

From this standpoint, Nemesius leaves no room for fate (εἱμαρμένη) in the domain of what depends on us. It is defined as a series of constant causes, an unchanging order and coherence that inexorably leads to some necessary end. Those who give validity to fate, insisting that even what depends on us happens by the power of fate, deviate from common understanding (κοιναὶ ἐννοίαι) and declare the redundancy of the entire community (πολιτεία). They perceive humans as mere instruments of some kind of external cycle, as fate makes some servants of God and others enemies of God. They declare God the Creator as the culprit of human sins and transgressions, whereby the very will of God is presented as some sort of necessity subordinate to fate. Free volitional decision, both human and divine, is nullified. In a Christian context, fate is obviously identified with predestination. The position of those affirming such a power is described as blasphemy and absurdity (ἀτοπία). It presupposes the abolition of providence and piety.[31]

Providence (πρόνοια), on the contrary, is vigorously affirmed. God is beneficent (εὐεργετικός) and therefore provident or foreseeing (προνοητικός). Providence is the will of God, through which everything that comes to be assumes its appropriate mode of existence, so that everything proceeds in the best possible way according to the right *logos*. Providence sets the stability (διαμονή), the condition (θέσις), the order (τάξις) of what exists, and the mode (τρόπος) of their preservation. Providence applies to both the general and the particular. Everything that occurs naturally, i.e., without depending on humans, is uniformly guided by providence. Providence also cares for humans, but in a different way. God provides even for the unfolding of the various connections and correspondences accompanying human existence, whereby every human is within God's providence with regard to their autonomy. Human intellect (νοῦς) is provident autonomously. "What depends on us" stems from us. Indeed, it is said that everything happens with God's permission (συγχώρησις). However, there are different kinds of permission. Life is ἀγών and στάδιον, a struggle and a stage, of virtue precisely because God, in His foreknowledge, leaves the πρᾶξις established by man to human free volitional decision, so that this practice and its results can truly depend on humans, on the basis of which they fully assume their responsibility.[32] God wants the best in every particular case. Human activity is sometimes permitted, sometimes forbidden. In the sphere of what depends on humans, however, the outcome necessarily follows both from human free decision and from providence.[33] Following

31 Ibid., 35–38, in: PG 40, 741B–761A.

32 Ibid., 42–44, in: PG 40, 780C–817A.

33 Ibid., 40, in: PG 40, 769BC.

these authoritative instructions, developments in Byzantine philosophy cannot be regarded as surprising.

4 Maximus the Confessor

Maximus the Confessor emphasizes that the will (θέλησις or θέλημα) or "simple will" belongs to the essence of the human being. Through the natural will, the essence is expressed, and this will is directly related to the *logos* of human nature.[34] Humans are free through and by nature.[35] Conversely, the determinate will (τὸ πῶς θέλειν) refers to the personal use of the will. It is based on the γνώμη described as qualified will (ποιὰ θέλησις).[36] The γνώμη is the ἕξις, the personal attitude of the will, from which the impulse to the concrete volitional decision (προαίρεσις) is given.[37] Γνώμη refers to προαίρεσις in the same way that ἕξις refers to ἐνέργεια: the ἕξις mediates and personifies the action of δύναμις. Both, ἕξις and γνώμη, are defined as "ὄρεξις ἐνδιάθετος," that is, as an internal desire.[38] They are supporting factors of self-determination. The actual γνώμη depends in its determinacy generally on the present mode of existence of human nature and concretely on the mode of life of the human hypostasis. Γνώμη can be an inclination towards desiring the good or, conversely, can oppose both reason and the will of God.[39] The specific mode of existence of the hypostasis and the hypostatic use of the mode of existence of human nature imply the natural will, as well as volitional inclinations and decisions, which are capable of acting even against the natural *logos*. Personal freedom is not to be reduced solely to accepting or rejecting the goal set by the natural principle. Human self-determination (τὸ αὐτεξούσιον) includes the ability to decisively oppose Divine will.[40]

34 Maximus Confessor, Opuscula theologica et polemica, 20, in: PG 91, 236C.

35 N. Loudovikos, *Analogical Identities: The Creation of the Christian Self. Beyond Spirituality and Mysticism in the Patristic Era*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2019, 311.

36 Disputatio cum Pyrrho, in: PG 91, 308D.

37 Opuscula theologica et polemica, 1, in: PG 91, 16B–17C; ibid., in: PG 91, 14, 153AB.

38 Ibid., 1, in: PG 91, 17C.

39 Ibid., 16, in: PG 91, 192D.

40 Cf. J.-C. Larchet, Introduction, in: Saint Maxime le Confesseur, *Ambigua*, Paris 1994, 29–31; J.M. Garrigues, *Maxime le Confesseur. La charité, avenir divin de l'homme*, Paris 1976, 100; D. Bradshaw, St. Maximus on Time, Eternity, and Divine Knowledge: in: https://www.academia.edu/17836492/, 3; J. Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, New York 1969, 112–115.

Maximus does not overlook the insistence of the biblical text that man is created not only in the image but also in the likeness of God. As the image of God, man is created as "self-governing and naturally active."[41] He holds a "self-empowering movement" (αὐτεξούσιος κίνησις), which is precisely the will,[42] enabling the attainment of the highest purpose of his existence, his own authenticity. This nature-given "self-governance," the privilege of freedom, is the "synergistic constituent between God and man," allowing the dynamic realization of "likeness."[43] If the image is related to the essence or nature of man, achieving likeness, inherently endowed as a potentiality, is a personal matter, the work of the freely motivated human hypostasis. While the human being is an image of God by nature, likeness to God can only be achieved personally and through grace.[44]

5 John Damascene

John Damascene elaborates on the position of Maximus (and of Nemesius) regarding the will, placing it in connection with the presence of rational capacity. Free will is innate to the nature endowed with reason. But it is not the same to will in general and to will in a certain way (πῶς θέλειν). The former is characteristic of nature, while the latter is the mode of usage chosen by the hypostasis with its personal volitional decisions. John emphasizes the role of volitional disposition (γνώμη), from which follows free volitional decision (προαίρεσις). This, in turn, is followed by intentional striving (ὁρμή), usage (χρῆσις), and cessation of desire. Created to be free, humans are responsible for their virtuous or vicious deeds.[45] Our own goodness or virtue depends both on God and on ourselves. Without God's help and grace, even orientation toward the Good is

41 Opuscula theologica et polemica, 1, in: PG 91, 157AC; Ep., 7, in: PG 91, 436AB.

42 Θέλησίς ἐστι ψυχῆς νοερᾶς αὐτεξούσιος κίνησις—Opuscula theologica et polemica, 26, in: PG 91, 277A.

43 С. Тутеков, *Добродетелта заради истината. Богословски и антропологични основи на аретологията*, Велико Търново 2009 [S. Toutekov, *Virtue for the Sake of Truth: The Theological and Anthropological Foundations of Aretology*, Veliko Tarnovo 2009—Bulgarian], 167–170.

44 Cf. В.В. Петров, *Максим Исповедник: онтология и метод в византийской философии VII века*, Москва 2007 [V.V. Petrov, *Maximus the Confessor: Ontology and Method in 7th Century Byzantine Philosophy*, Moscow 2007—Russian], 41–42.

45 Johannes Damascenus, Expositio fidei orthodoxae, II, 22; III, 14; III, 18, in: *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, Bd. II, ed. B. Kotter, Berlin–New York 1973 (ed. Kotter 2), 89, 51–91, 94; 138, 30–140, 88; 159, 57–160, 70 (PG 94, 944A–945C; 1036A–1040B; 1076BC).

impossible, yet the specific choosing of virtue or vice is the work of humans. With the cooperation of God's grace, humans have the ability to persevere in goodness through the strength of their will.[46]

Damascene adds a reflection on predestination. Already in the chapter on providence he emphasizes that what depends on us is not a matter of providence but of our free will, dividing providence into benevolence-ευδοκία and permissiveness-συγχώρησις with their associated forms.[47] He explains that the choice-αἵρεσις of action is our own (ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἐστι). Good deeds reach their goal through the co-operation of God, while evil deeds are carried out on the basis of God's permission-ἐγκατάλειψη, justly abandoning someone according to His foreknowledge-πρόγνωσις.[48] Of the things that depend on us, God desires and approves of good deeds, whereas He neither desires nor approves of evil, yet He accepts human self-empowerment.[49] Within this framework, Damascene unfolds the reflection titled *On Foreknowledge and Predestination* (*Περὶ προγνώσεως καὶ προορισμοῦ*).

It should be noted, the first sentence states, that God knows everything in advance (πάντα μὲν προγινώσκει), but does not predestine everything (οὐ πάντα δὲ προόριζει). God predestines what is not dependent on us thanks to His foreknowledge. He also knows in advance what depends on us but does not predetermine it in advance: He does not desire the realization of evil and does not reject virtue. It should be known that virtue is given to our nature by God, who Himself is the origin and cause of all good. Without the cooperation and help of God, it is impossible for us to will or do good. But it is up to us to abide in virtue and follow God, or else to distance ourselves from virtue. Consistently and in accordance with tradition, Damascene rejects the existence of predestination (προορισμός) with regard to the human life path. God provides everything within our power, but without predestining it, because only that which is not subject to us is predetermined. Damascene places free will at the center of human activity, which either cooperates with or opposes God's grace.[50]

46 Johannes Damascenus, Expositio fidei, II, 12, in: ed. Kotter 2, 76, 24–36 (PG 94, 924AB). Cf. Iohannes Damascenus, De duabus in Christo voluntatibus, 21–24, in: PG 95, 152B–153D.

47 Johannes Damascenus, Expositio fidei, II, 29, in: ed. Kotter 2, 101, 24–102, 47 (PG 94, 964C–965C).

48 Ibid., II, 29, in: ed. Kotter 2, 102, 48–51 (PG 94, 968A).

49 Ibid., II, 29, in: ed. Kotter 2, 103, 76–79 (PG 94, 969B).

50 Ibid., II, 30, in: ed. Kotter 2, 103, 2–13 (PG 94, 972A–973A).

6 Photius of Constantinople

Photius of Constantinople, who primarily perceives human likeness to God in reason and freedom, also rejects the idea of predestination. Divine foreknowledge, he asserts firmly, does not render human actions necessary or involuntary. The freedom of human will has never been violated by God. God does not force anyone to do good. God's vocation is not sufficient. Besides, free will and human action are necessary. Bliss is bestowed, not due to some inevitable necessity, but based on the free resolve to do good. Even God's grace itself is not irresistible. Humans can accept or reject grace, and their consent is mandatory in each individual case. There is no divine predestination of evil either. Curses fall only upon those who do not wish to be saved.[51]

7 Michael Psellus

7.1 *Will and Free Decision*

Michael Psellus directly addresses the question "What is the will (βούλησις) and what is practical reasoning (πρακτικὸς λογισμός)?" The answer is that the will belongs to the rational part of the soul (λογιστικὸν μορίον). It propels the desire (ὄρεξις) towards what is not desired without rational reflection. From this arises the ἐνεργεία βουληυτικὴ ὁρμὴ, the activity of volitional longing. Practical reasoning, πρακτικός λογισμός, is defined as practice and activity (πρᾶξις καὶ ἐνεργεία), directed by rational reflection to strive for what is desired.[52] Free volitional decision (προαίρεσις) and attention (προσοχή) are discussed in strict connection with it. Προαίρεσις precedes practice. Volitional decision utilizes reason to decide what is good (τὰ καλά) and directs desire towards genuine goodness and the constant fulfillment of lack. The decision of the will arises from both reason and desire. Through προσοχή, we pay attention to the deeds that we do and the words that we say. *Π*ροαίρεσις and προσοχή are directly related mediating powers, having their place between νοερός λόγος and δοξατικός λόγος.[53]

7.2 *Necessity, Fate, and Fortune*

Psellus problematizes the theme of will and freedom in connection with what puts them into question: necessity and fate. Introducing the entire thematic

51 Photius, Amphilochiae, 1; 24; 76; 97; 237; 284, PG 101, 80A; 473D; 608C–612C; 1029C; 1117A.

52 Michael Psellus, De omnifaria doctrina, 66, in: *Michael Psellus. De omnifaria doctrina*, ed. L.G. Westerink, Utrecht 1948 (ed. Westerink), 42, 2–6.

53 De omnifaria doctrina, 63, in: ed. Westerink, 42, 3–12.

context into the horizon of providence (πρόνοια) requires precise differentiation between εἱμαρμένη and τύχη, two words commonly translated as "fate." But the difference between them has decisive significance.

Philosophers call "necessity" (ἀνάγκη) a power that inevitably acts on effects (ἀποτελέσματα), Psellus asserts. It unambiguously determines whether the contingent thing (τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον) should be or not, and when it does, it does so in a fixed manner, not allowing for deviations or modalities. On the other hand, "contingent" is defined as that which depends on our free volitional decision (προαίρεσις) and can be realized equally in one way or another.[54] The contradiction cannot remain unresolved, and overcoming it occurs through the interpretation of the concepts εἱμαρμένη and τύχη.

In *De omnifaria doctrina*, Psellus defines fate-εἱμαρμένη as "the nature of the cosmos," which moves bodies. It is a secondary manifestation of providence. Unlike providence, fate does not have motive power directly, but requires suitable times and places to act. The corporeal is subject to providence and fate. The incorporeal is solely under the jurisdiction of providence.[55] Psellus reduces fate to an instrument of God. It is not only subordinate to providence but also acts solely on the material and corporeal. Therefore, it is not valid in regard to human relations and human will. The pagan understanding of εἱμαρμένη is neutralized within Christianity. Even God's foreknowledge does not interfere with human nature and free will. It is not the cause of everything that happens. Events in the world dependent on humans ultimately unfold according to their own interrelation (κατὰ τὸν ἴδιον εἰρμόν).[56]

In another text commenting on Plato, Psellus states that εἱμαρμένη is the divine law, acting also in the soul. However, when he lists the causes of historical developments, Psellus, following Nemesius and John of Damascus, arranges them in the following order of priority: the Divine (τὸ θεῖον, which denotes the πρόνοια), fate-εἱμαρμένη, nature (φύσις), fortune-τύχη and spontaneity (αὐτόματον). Psellus describes τύχη as the collision and concurrent meeting (σύμπτωσις καὶ συνδρομή) of two causes, from which originate free volitional decisions, which are different from what happens by nature. The principle of human practice (ἀρχὴ πράξεως) is our intellect (νοῦς). Every skill, every virtue, and all mental and rational practices come from us and from providence.[57] Fortune-τύχη does

54 Michael Psellus, De omnifaria doctrina, 104, in: ed. Westerink, 58.

55 Michael Psellus, De omnifaria doctrina, 105, in: ed. Westerink, 58–59.

56 Cf. L. Benakis, Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos in der Byzantinischen Philosophie, in: L. Benakis, *Texts and Studies on Byzantine Philosophy* I, Athens 2002, 149–152.

57 Michael Psellus, De distributione perfectorum et necessariorum, in: *Michaeli Pselli philosophica minora*, t. II, eds. J.M. Duffi, D.J. O'Meara, Leipzig 1989, 29, 18–23, 28–30.

not act in created beings without reason, where there is no order and connection. It acts in the presence of free volitional decisions and a presumed purpose.[58]

While εἱμαρμένη is viewed approximately as *fatum*, understood as an instrument of providence in the realm of the finite and material, τύχη, roughly thought of as *fortuna*, is the point of annulment of necessary causes. This point manifests itself as a territory for the action of human free will and for the manifestation of the human hypostasis. The somewhat humorous comparison drawn by Theodore II Lascaris between the teacher (παιδαγωγός) and the fortune-τύχη which whirls around the student is symptomatic in this context.[59] This is why, when discussing the historical causes of action in the field of the political, Michael of Ephesus, the only commentator on Aristotle's *Politics*, briefly asserts that with regard to the historical reasons for actions in the political sphere, what God intends takes precedence,[60] before directly discussing the qualities specific to political leaders.

8 Providence and Fortune in Historiography

The motivating center of Byzantine historiography lies in the connection between providence-πρόνοια and fortune-τύχη. Byzantine historians are entirely convinced of the invisible intervention of God in historical processes. Even seemingly insignificant deeds, as well as historically formative events, are placed in connection with God's providence. Historians unanimously agree that without God's consent, human efforts remain futile, wherein θεία πρόνοια, τὸ θεῖον, and τὸ δαιμόνιον are commonly used as synonyms. God governs developments in the world. At the same time, πρόνοια and the "pagan" τύχη seem to be of equal importance for historiographers. Fortune-τύχη serves as a consistent interpretive mechanism in Byzantine historiography.[61]

This perspective conditions the fact that attributing fatalistic traits to τύχη is a rare phenomenon in historiographical texts. Such an interpretation is to be found, for example, in Laonikus Chalcocondyles, who worked after the middle

58 Michael Psellus, De omnifaria doctrina, 106, in: ed. Westerink, 59.

59 *Theodorus II Ducas Lascaris, Satyra ad paedagogum, in: Theodorus II Ducas Lascaris, Opuscula rhetorica, ed.* A. Tartaglia, München–Leipzig 2000, 154, 10–11.

60 *Aristotelis Politica*, ed. O. Immisch, Leipzig 1929, 309, 1–9.

61 Cf. H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachige profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, t. 1, München 1978, 262–265, 388, 400, 415, 463–464.

of the 15th century and was a pupil of Plethon.[62] Historical and political reality is a complex network of relationships woven by active exchange between its agents. No doubt, the leading active cause in this field is divine providence. The causal influence of natural processes and, to be sure, of historical persons is seen as parallel to divine providence. Decisive for this view is the patent philosophical evidence that the world is not a coexistence of stable objects, but an energetic field formed by dynamic relationships causing single events. The actual being is not determined by substances, but by dynamics, "practices," realized in co-existence, whose primary causal principle is freedom.[63]

In this context, another philosophical turn manifested by Christian thought plays a constitutive role. After the *Chronography* of Michael Psellus at the latest, a significant part of historiographical texts is dedicated to prosopography, i.e. to description of personal traits in their uniqueness and existential dynamics. This explains one of the main principles of social and political life in Byzantium: the absence of a blue blood aristocracy. The words εὐγένεια, εὐγενής have never been used for denoting any kind of familial aristocracy. Nobility is seen as a moral virtue, designating the soul of the subject and enabling the latter to join the political and social elite. For this reason, friendly ties are viewed as the primary positive motivator in the sphere of politics. Friendship, and not familial relations, was the major factor in a political career.[64]

The conceptual framework outlined remains normative for Byzantine philosophy. The priority of divine providence is affirmed both in the realm of the necessary and in the realm of free human action. The generally valid position states that God, by bestowing His grace, has foreseen in His providence that some people will use their free will well, while others, who abuse their freedom, will do so badly. Good deeds achieve their goal through the participation of God, while evil deeds are realized through God's abandonment. Everything happens through God's permission (συγχώρησις).[65]

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62 H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachige profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, t. 1, München 1978, 489.

63 Cf. C. Yannaras, The Ontology of the Person—an outline, in: *Ontology and History. Conference Booklet*, eds. S. Mitralexis, A. Kaethler, Delphi 2015, 71–77.

64 Cf. D. Angelov, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium, 1204–1330*, Cambridge 2007, 217–234.

65 According to the definition of Maximus, evil is "nothing other than the deficiency of the activity/energy of innate natural powers with respect to their goal" (τὸ κακὸν τῆς πρὸς τὸ τέλος τῶν ἐγκειμένων τῇ φύσει δυνάμεων ἐνεργείας ἐστὶν ἔλλειψις)—Quaestiones ad Thalassium, prol., in: PG 90, 253B. If we turn it around, notes Torstein T. Tollefsen, virtue must be the proper activity of innate natural powers with respect to the goal—T.T. Tollefsen, *The Christian Metaphysics of St. Maximus the Confessor: Creation, World-Order, and Redemption*, Turnhout 2023, 40.

Τύχη, fortune, is interpreted as the point of neutralization of necessary causes. This point manifests itself as the territory of the action of human free will and the manifestation of the human hypostasis. In the realm of alternative possibilities, the decisive factor is human free will. Human historical reality is established through the synergy between the action of providence and human free action. Affirming some kind of providence associated with fate (εἱμαρμένη) and necessity and ruling regardless of the deeds of rational and volitional human beings is considered contradictory to reason and godless. "Belief in the power of fate, or chance or some fatalistic astral mythology were nothing but remnants of paganism, incompatible with the teaching of Holy Scriptures and faith in Divine providence."[66] The few philosophers in Byzantium, most of them inclined towards Platonism, who accepted some form of fatalism or predetermination of human actions, were an exception in all periods.

9 The Debate about Fate in the 15th Century

During the 15th century the issue was specifically dealt with debates between the newly arisen Platonism and Aristotelianism. In 1439, in *De differentiis* (and even more sharply in his subsequent works), Plethon raises Plato's thesis that everything in the world happens by necessity: everything that arises is caused, and every cause has a strictly determined consequence. He asserts a rigid fatalism, underlining the inalterability of fate (εἱμαρμένη). He claims that denying fate also denies Divine foreknowledge. So-called free voluntary choice occurs under the dictates of external circumstances and determined internal desires. Freedom is not contradictory to necessity; it is a service to supreme necessity, which is the fulfillment of human destiny. Even Bessarion, who defends Plethon, noticeably takes a compromise position. He interprets providence as an unchanging and constant succession of determinations, while fate is the same, but unfolding dynamically. In a perpetually different and unique way, it transforms the unchanging into something becoming, from which the random and possible derive. Fate motivates diverse and unique developments and enables spontaneity and unforeseen events. Thus, the locus of free will is described. Fate has only a conditional influence on reason, directing it towards the grounds for choice. Much sharper are the opponents of Plethon. George Scholarius considers Plethon's ideas an attack against orthodoxy. Theodore

66 L. Benakis, Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos in der Byzantinischen Philosophie, in: L. Benakis, *Texts and Studies on Byzantine Philosophy* I, Athens 2002, 145.

Gaza interprets fate as a hypothetical necessity, opening space for rational judgment and free volitional decision. George of Trebizond rejects the identification of providence with fate. Fate is a dynamic and temporally developing manifestation of the things caused by God. Human intellect is not directly dependent on it. Matthew Camariotes finally states that fate is not any kind of first acting cause because there is something else that acts before it. Whoever affirms fate renders providence unnecessary. God knows everything we do but does not cause it. Nothing imperfect is determined by the unconditionally benevolent God. Man is subject to God. However, God does not force him; He encourages him.[67] Fate, conceived of as a bearer of insurmountable fatalism, is rejected in this debate as well.[68]

10 Deification and Freedom according to Gregory Palamas

The teaching on the deification of man, developed by Gregory Palamas, denies any abstract equality among people and upholds the obviousness of hierarchy in the knowledge and possession of divine life. Christ's resurrection is not simply the resurrection of human nature but rather the revival of every believer in Christ, demonstrating their faith through deeds.[69] It does not imply some predetermined hierarchy of existence, but rather a personal spiritual state, reflected in personal will and free decision. Hence, personal measure (μέτρον) follows, determining the energy and degree of openness to incoming grace—according to one's deeds, virtue, and purity.[70] The divine light does not destroy man's natural powers; rather, it makes them more effective.

Within this perspective, Palamas emphasizes human freedom. Only the rational being, endowed with freedom, is capable of changing according to its

67 Cf. Ц. Бояджиев, *От Плитон до Висарион. Философските дискусии от последните десетилетия на Византия*, София 2016 [T. Boiadjiev, *From Plethon to Bessarion: Philosophical Discussions in the Final Decades of Byzantium*, Sofia 2016—Bulgarian], *passim*.

68 Cf. G. Kapriev, Freier Wille und Vorherbestimmung in der Byzantinischen Tradition (von Nemesios von Emesa bis Photios von Konstantinopel), in: *L'agire morale e i suoi limiti: Fato, Determinismo e Libero Arbitrio nel Medioevo / Moral Agency and its Constraints: Fate, Determinism and Free Will in the Middle Ages*, eds. A. Beccarisi, F. Retucci (Medioevo 42/2017), 125–137; G. Kapriev, The Political and the Byzantine Philosophy, in: *Le théologico-politique au Moyen Âge*, éd. D. Poirel, Paris, 2020, 39–42.

69 Киприан, (Керн), *Антропология св. Григория Паламы*, Париж 1950 [Ciprian (Kern), *The Anthropology of Gregory Palamas*, Paris 1950—Russian], 292 and 306; Gregorius Palamas, Homilia 21, in: PG 151, 277A.

70 Gregorius Palamas, Homilia 35, in: PG 151, 448B; Theophanes, 27, ed. Christou II, 255, 5–9.

will: to be enlightened if it adheres to God's will, or to lose the light and become darkness if it opposes it. Man cannot deify himself with his own activity, but neither can this happen without synergy, without cooperation between God and man. The divine disposition (ἕξις θεία) is interpreted by Palamas as a result of the synergy of grace and human aspiration.

Grace and nature are not considered as static entities and in no sense do they oppose each other. Their coexistence does not concern "merits," but rather traces the joint action of the two wills, divine and human, whereby grace is seen as the increasing presence of God in man. Human nature is not conceived of as a static and closed whole, but as a dynamic reality, determined in its existence by its internal connection with God. The dynamics of grace delineate the necessary mode of relationship between the two natures, realized through energies and in energies.

11 Concluding Remark

The defining idea for Byzantium persists into the post-Byzantine period. Just one among many examples of this is the Message of the Eastern Patriarchs on the Orthodox Faith, sent to the Anglican Church in 1723. In the third article, discussing the question of predestination, it is expressly stated that God, bestowing His grace, has provided that some of mankind will use their free will well, while others wickedly, the latter abusing their freedom. The talk about predestination, which makes judgments regardless of human deeds, is qualified as heretical, foolish, and godless. It contradicts the Holy Scripture, which teaches that the believer is saved by faith and deeds. God does not destroy man's free will in the process of redemption.[71] This position remains valid to this day.

71 Quoted after Т. Коев, *Православен катехизис и Послание на източните патриарси за православната вяра*, София 1991 [T. Коеv, *Orthodox Catechism and the Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs on the Orthodox Faith*, Sofia 1991—Bulgarian], 213–214.

CHAPTER 7

Time, Aeon, Eternity

Shaping the thought of Byzantine philosophers regarding the temporal and trans-temporal dimensions of existence, the definition of time is laid out by Basil the Great: Χρόνος δέ ἐστι τὸ συμπαρεκτεινόμενον τῇ συστάσει τοῦ κόσμου διάστημα—time is the interval (or: extent, extension) co-extensive with the existence of the cosmos.[1] This definition is based on a broad Hellenic tradition, from which it simultaneously distances itself.[2]

1 Hellenic Tradition

Firstly, it is necessary to mention Plato's concept, as developed in *Timaeus* 37c–39e. According to Plato, time begins with the formation of the cosmos. He associates time with movement and relates it to the movement of the seven "wandering" stars: time began when the heavens were formed, i.e., the seven stars.[3] Plato's proposition that time began to exist with the creation of the cosmos was inevitably followed by the Christian authors. Plato problematizes time from the perspective of becoming (γένεσις) with its impermanent character. Therefore, he tries to grasp time from the perspective of "eternity" (αἰών): time is a moving image (εἰκών) of eternity,[4] which is postulated as the immovable paradigm of happening, of becoming over the course of time. It should be noted that Plato uses αἰώνιος and ἀΐδιος synonymously when describing the intelligible.

Aristotle also considers time as something that inevitably belongs to movement without being movement itself.[5] Time is defined as a number of movement (ἀριθμὸς κινήσεως), and it is what is counted, not what we count with.[6] Time is a measure (μέτρον) of motion and of being moved.[7] The "now" (νῦν) is

1 Basilius Magnus, Contra Eunomium, 1, 21, in: PG 29, 560B.
2 Cf. S. Markov, The Byzantine Concept of Historical Time: Origin and Development, in: *Christian and Islamic Philosophies of Time*, eds. S. Mitralexis, M. Podbielski, Wilmington 2018, 27–45.
3 Tim. 37e1–3; 38b6–7; 38c3–6; 38e4–5.
4 Tim. 37d7–e1.
5 Phys. 4, 11, 219a9–10.
6 Phys. 4, 11, 219b1–8.
7 Phys. 4, 12, 220b32–221a1.

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something like the unit (μονάς) of number, without being an "atom" of time; it is rather a limit. Time is both made continuous by the "now" and divided by it.[8] In any case, the time is not the number of one and the same point, but of the extremes (and not the parts) of one segment.[9] Aristotle points out that time cannot be brought into connection with any particular movement because "time is equally present everywhere and with all things." Furthermore, movements have speeds, i.e., they can be fast or slow, whereas time does not. "Fast" and "slow" are defined through time.[10] "Now" is the boundary of past and future, because we say "before" and "after" with reference to the distance from "now". "Before" and "after" are within time, because "now" is within time.[11] Therefore, "now" is not a part of time. As a boundary, it is not time, but a concomitant feature of it (συμβέβηκεν). "Now" is a number only insofar as it computes (ἀριθμεῖ).[12] "Before" and "after" are thus in time, they are time because they are calculable.[13] Aristotle asks the question: If soul did not exist would time exist or not? Because if there were no counter, the counted thing cannot exist, so evidently there would be no number; since a number is either what is counted or what counts. And if nothing else besides the soul and its mind is naturally capable of counting, then if the soul does not exist, there can be no time, but only that which in some sense is the bearer of time, for example, if movement were possible without soul.[14]

Both the Platonic and Aristotelian views of time were questioned sufficiently early. As late as the beginning of the 3rd century BC, Zeno of Citium started to launch his position that time is not ἀριθμός or μέτρον, but διάστημα. According to him, the term "extension" better expressed the idea of continuity in both the temporal and spatial plan. Time is defined as "extension of motion" (κινήσεως διάστημα). Zeno also draws a distinction between different διαστήματα, determined by entities moving at different speeds between two points. His concept was further developed by Chrysippus of Soli, who also applied it

8 Phys. 4, 11, 220a4–6.

9 Phys. 4, 11, 220a15–18.

10 Cf. M. DelCogliano, Basil of Caesarea versus Eunomius of Cyzicus on the Nature of Time: A Patristic Reception of the Critique of Plato, in: *Vigiliae Christianae*, 68 (2014), 509. Cf. *Phys.* 4, 10, 218b13–18.

11 Phys. 4.14, 223a4–8.

12 Phys. 4, 11, 220a21–22.

13 Phys. 4, 14, 223a28–29.

14 Phys. 4, 14, 223a21–28. Cf. S. Mitralexis, *Ever-Moving Repose. The Notion of Time in Maximus the Confessor's Philosophy through the Perspective of a Relational Ontology. Dissertation*, Berlin 2014, 125–138.

to the movement of the cosmos. A διάστημα expresses the course of a body between two points, but time does not cease with it. Thus Chrysippus speaks of a twofold character of time: the movement of a body between the points A and B is only a segment of the whole course of time.[15] At the same time he postulates an equation between space and time. They are two infinite extensions or expanses in the void-κενόν, one spreading in three dimensions, the other infinitely into the past and into the future. That is why he doesn't talk about a unit of time or indivisible now (νῦν ἀμερὲς), because time is considered as a non-interruptible, continuous stream, infinitely divisible. Chrysippus, however, emphasizes that time does not exist in its entirety, but only as a now, due to which the past and the future are present.[16] The Stoics took a "less subjectivist" view in speaking of time, not as something countable or counted by someone conscious of counting, but as merely depending on the existence of movement.[17]

Over time, Stoic ideas were also borrowed by representatives of Platonism and Aristotelianism. Philo of Alexandria, for example, adopts the definition of time as the duration, interval or extension (διάστημα) of the motion of the cosmos. Additionally, he begins to designate time as an element of sensory-perceived life. He simultaneously designates the lifespan of the intelligible world with the term αἰών. Following him, Clement of Alexandria uses the term ἀδιάστατον only in reference to God, meaning "without division" or "without dimension," or both.[18] Alcinous, who lived in the second century AD and is considered a representative of Middle Platonism, emphasized that God created time as an extension to the movement of the cosmos (τῆς κινήσεως τοῦ κόσμου διάστημα), as an image of eternity, which is the measure of the stability of the eternal cosmos. For his part, Galen criticized the Aristotelian definition of time

15 Three main representative definitions of Chrysipus are: "the extension of the movement of the cosmos" (διάστημα τῆς τοῦ κόσμου κινήσεως) "the extension accompanying the movement of the cosmos" (τὸ παρακολουθοῦν διάστημα τῇ τοῦ κόσμου κινήσει) and "the extension of movement according to which one speaks of the measure of fastness and slowness" (κινήσεως διάστημα καθ' ὅ ποτὲ λέγεται μέτρον τάχους τε καὶ βραδυτῆτος)—cf. M. DelCogliano, Basil of Caesarea versus Eunomius of Cyzicus on the Nature of Time: A Patristic Reception of the Critique of Plato, in: *Vigiliae Christianae*, 68 (2014), 516.

16 В. Цветковић, *Бог и време. Ученье о времену Светог Григорија Ниског*, Ниш 2013 [V. Cvetković, *God and Time: The Teaching on Time of St. Gregory of Nyssa*, Niš 2013—Serbian], 216–226.

17 . M. DelCogliano, Basil of Caesarea versus Eunomius of Cyzicus on the Nature of Time: A Patristic Reception of the Critique of Plato, in: *Vigiliae Christianae*, 68 (2014), 516.

18 D. Bradshaw, Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers, in: *The Thomist* 70 (2006), 327–328 et 331.

and furthermore postulated that the existence of time is completely independent of motion.[19] Plotinus's reflections on time are particularly significant in our context.

He begins with a sharp distinction between everlastingness (αἰών) and time (χρόνος): αἰών refers to the perpetually enduring being (περὶ τὴν ἀίδιον εἶναι), while time refers to the becoming and the visible cosmos.[20] With regard to the idiosyncrasy of time, he states unequivocally: movement may be interrupted and brought to a halt, but time cannot be: time is continuous.[21] Plotinus describes its nature as extension-διάστημα, unfolding through changes and actions.[22] Time itself is not a measure. It is the one being measured (e.g., by the duration from sunrise to next sunrise). By its nature and concept, it is not the measure of movement; it is accidentally used for that purpose. Time serves as a measurement but is not a measure itself. The measurer is a specific "I". Plotinus asks directly: Who actually is this I? The one by which it is measured. Therefore, in that it measures, it is not the measure itself.[23] Plotinus agrees with Plato that time is neither a measured thing nor a thing measured by something else, and repeats his thesis that it originates along with the sky according to the pattern of eternity. It is thereby a moving image, because time is also not at rest if the soul is not at rest, together with which it runs and circles. The being of time is associated with the world soul. This does not mean the movement of the soul, which exists within it and passes through things in everlasting effectiveness, because what lies before and above it is eternity, which does not progress and spread out with it. Time is everywhere in the visible world, because it does not absent itself from any part of the cosmos, just as our soul does not absent itself from any part of us. Time is also within us. It is in every soul and is homogeneous in each, and all souls are one. Therefore, just like eternity, which exists in all homogeneous things in different ways, time is not pulled apart and divided by individual souls.[24]

Plotinus discusses the aeon extensively. He calls the entire intelligible cosmos everlasting (αἰώνιος) and eternal (ἀΐδιος) and asks himself whether the αἰών coincides with eternity-ἀιδιότης or it is through eternity. He does not answer

19 M. DelCogliano, Basil of Caesarea versus Eunomius of Cyzicus on the Nature of Time: A Patristic Reception of the Critique of Plato, in: *Vigiliae Christianae*, 68 (2014), 514–515 et 519.

20 Plotinus, Enneades, 3, 7, 1, 1.

21 Ibid, 3, 7, 8, 60.

22 Ibid., 3, 7, 12, 113.

23 Ibid., 3, 7, 12, 122–124.

24 Ibid., 3, 7, 13, 132–142.

the question. In any case, in several places,[25] he calls the intellect-νοῦς both aeonic (αἰώνιος) and eternal (ἀΐδιος). The αἰών is a unitary nature that exists without extension (ἀδιαστάτος), but is at the same time a complex of powers and multiples (μὶαν μὲν οὖσαν, πολλὰ δὲ δυναμένην καὶ πολλὰ οὖσαν). Plotinus mentions essence, motion, rest, diversity, and identity, emphasizing the uninterruptedness of activity (τῆς ἐνεργείας τὸ ἄπαυστον) and presence. Plotinus defines the powers gathered in the One (εἰς ἓν)—as it is typical for the Hellenic tradition—with the term "life". He defines the αἰών as life, dwelling in identity, which encompasses the whole of permanent existence: it has the whole always present and is not now this, then something else, but everything together. The aeon is an undivided completion in that everything is concentrated as if on one point. It is always in the present as whatever it is. Accordingly, the αἰών is not the intelligible substrate, but it is as if irradiated by the light of the identity of this substrate. The αἰών is the life of the being-having in the being, in its complete, uninterrupted, unchangeable totality *par excellence*.[26]

2 Basil the Great. The Cappadocians

Confronted with this background, Basil the Great develops the first systematic conceptualization of time in Christian culture. Already in the fifth paragraph of the first homily on the *Hexaemeron* he outlines the basic lines of his understanding: "It appears, indeed, that even before this world an order of things existed of which our mind can form an idea … The birth of the world was preceded by a condition (κατάστασις) of things suitable for the exercise of supercosmic powers (τῆς ὑπερκοσμίοις δυνάμεσι πρέποσα), outstripping the limits of time, everlasting and eternal (ἡ ὑπέρχρονος, ἡ αἰωνία ἡ ἀΐδιος). The Creator and Demiurge of the universe perfected His works in it, spiritual light for the happiness of all who love the Lord, intellectual and invisible natures, all the orderly arrangement of pure intelligences who are beyond the reach of our mind and of whom we cannot even discover the names".[27] The three dimensions are already mentioned: time, aeon, eternity.

Reflecting on the nature and existence of time, Basil associates the succession of time (τοῦ χρόνου διέξοδος) with the introduction of the visible cosmos

25 E.g. Ibid., 2, 4, 3, 10; 3, 1, 1, 8; 3, 5, 7, 50; 5, 1, 4, 7; 5, 1, 9, 4.

26 Ibid., 3, 7, 3, 13–22.

27 Basilius Magnus, Homiliae IX in Hexaemeron, 1, 5, in: PG 29, 15A. English translation by Blomfield Jackson, in: *From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, vol. 8, Buffalo, NY 1895.

into existence—a dwelling place for everything between birth and death. The nature of this succession is analogous to the nature of the world. Time is ever pressing on and passing away and never stopping in its course. Or is not time such that its past has disappeared, its future is not yet here, and the present escapes our senses before we can quite recognize it? Its nature is in accord with beings subject to change.[28]

Basil poses the question about the beginning of time, about the beginning of the world, this point where time's first movement originated. After discussing a wide range of meanings of the term "ἀρχή," he postulates that creation occurred rapidly and in no time. It is therefore said, "In the beginning created," because the beginning is something indivisible and dimensionless. It is ἀδιάστατος—without extension. "The beginning of the road is not yet the road, and that of the house is not yet the house; so the beginning of time is not yet time and not even the smallest particle of it. If some objector tell us that the beginning is a time, he ought then, as he knows well, to submit it to the division of time—a beginning, a middle and an end. Now it is ridiculous to imagine a beginning of the beginning. Furthermore, if we divide the beginning into two, we make two instead of one, or rather make several, we are really making an infinity, for all that which is divided is divisible to the infinite. Thus then, if it is said, 'in the beginning God created,' it is to teach us that at the will of God the world arose in less than an instant."[29]

The beginning of time is a very special pivotal point. That which sets the principles of time is timeless in principle. It borders on the aeon of the intelligible world and thus corresponds to it. The beginning of time, after all, is not aeonic according to its character. It is ἀδιάστατος. But only eternity lacks extension. The nature of the ἀρχή of time thus raises in itself essential features of the aeonic and the eternal, in that this ἀρχή is precisely the beginning of time. It is a metaphysical nucleus that initiates the physical along with its history and acts within it.

The world created from nothing was created not in time, the world is created with time.[30] Already in Athanasius of Alexandria it can be read that the world has a diastemic beginning to its being (διαστηματικὴν ἀρχὴν τοῦ εἶναι ἔχει).[31] The topic is further developed by Basil. He defines time as a διάστημα coextensive

28 Ibid., in: PG 29, 15B.

29 Ibid., in: PG 29, 17A.

30 S. Tanev, *Energy in Orthodox Theology & Physics. From Controversy to Encounter*, Eugene, Oregon 2017, 141.

31 Athanasius Alexandrinus, Oratio II contra Arianos, 57, in: PG 26, 268C.

with the existence of the cosmos: "Rather, time is the extension coextensive with the existence of the cosmos. All motion is measured by time, whether of the stars, of living creatures, or of anything else that moves. On the basis of time we say that one thing is quicker or slower than another. The quicker is what traverses a longer interval (διάστημα) in less time; the slower is what moves across a shorter interval in more time"[32] Time is thus coextensive with the existence of every mode of created being. The διάστημα is constitutive of both time and everlastingness (αἰών).[33]

The term "διάστημα"—interval, extension, duration—is used in respect of spatial as well as temporal relations. In the latter case, it generally denotes an interval or distance between two points in time and is indivisibly connected with time-χρόνος or with the course of time. Eastern Orthodox Christian thinkers speak of both horizontal and vertical diastemas. While the course of human beings in the world and the course of the world itself are within the scope of the horizontal διάστημα, the ascent to God—both for the human soul and for the angels—is identified with the vertical.[34]

The designation of time as διάστημα indicates borrowings from the Stoic and Middle Platonic conceptions of time. A closer look at the quoted passage testifies to another specificity of Basil's concept of time. In his considerations of the "faster and slower" and the measurement of movement by time an approximation to the arguments of Galen and other authors that the existence of time is not necessarily connected to the movement of objects, including celestial bodies, can be observed. There is no causal connection between time and movement at all. Time is not identified with movement, and it is not movement that makes its existence possible; rather movements—with their quickness or slowness—are measured by time. Time is their measure. For Basil, the existence of time does not depend on the presence of movement, but on the existence of the cosmos. Time is not dependent on the

32 Basilius Magnus, Contra Eunomium, 1, 21, in: PG 29, 560B: "Χρόνος δέ ἐστι τὸ συμπαρεκτεινόμενον τῇ συστάσει τοῦ κόσμου διάστημα· ᾧ πᾶσα παραμετρεῖται κίνησις, εἴτε ἀστέρων, εἴτε ζώων, εἴτε οὑτινοσοῦν τῶν κινουμένων, καθὸ λέγομεν ταχύτερον ἢ βραδύτερον ἕτερον ἑτέρου· ταχύτερον μὲν τὸ ἐν ἐλάττονι χρόνῳ πλεῖον διάστημα μεταβαῖνον, βραδύτερον δὲ τὸ ἔλαττον ἐν πλείονι χρόνῳ κινούμενον." Cf. ibid. 2, 13, in: PG 29, 593C.

33 D. Bradshaw, Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers, in: *The Thomist* 70 (2006), 336–337; M. DelCogliano, Basil of Caesarea versus Eunomius of Cyzicus on the Nature of Time: A Patristic Reception of the Critique of Plato, in: *Vigiliae Christianae*, 68 (2014), 525.

34 Владимир Цветковић, *Бог и време. Ученье о времену Светог Григорија Ниског*, Ниш 2013 [V. Cvetković, *God and Time: The Teaching on Time of St. Gregory of Nyssa*, Niš 2013—Serbian], 207 et 215.

things created by God but on God Himself.[35] When God instituted the nature of time, He gave the intervals of days as measures and signs.[36] Time is measured through weeks: the week counts up the movement of time. The week always repeats perpetually (ἀεί) according to the figure (σχῆμα) of the circle. The same can be said about the αἰών, adds Basil—it returns within itself and never ends.[37]

Therefore he did not call the beginning of time the first day, Basil continues, but *one* day (ἡμέρα μία), so that it already had a relationship with the everlasting (τὸ συγγενὲς ἔχῃ πρὸς τὸν αἰῶνα) in its naming. "It was, in reality, fit and natural to call 'one' the day whose character is to be one wholly separated (μοναχοῦ) and isolated from all the others. If the Scripture speaks to us of many ages (αἰῶνες), saying everywhere, 'age of age, and ages of ages,' (αἰῶνα αἰῶνος, αἰῶνας αἰώνων) we do not see it enumerate them as first, second, and third. It follows that we are hereby shown not so much limits, ends and succession of ages, as distinctions between various states and modes of action."[38]

The concept of "extension" (διάστημα) in Basil's thought primarily refers to the interval between the beginning of creation and its end. It characterizes the radical bifurcation of the divine and created orders of existence.[39] It applies to the aeon as well. Because created, the aeon is limited by its beginning. Therefore, it should not be called "eternity," although it is infinite and not temporal. Basil understands eternity as lack of limit. Above all, he describes the state older than the creation of the world, the kingdom of the angels, as an aeon. The angelic powers are infinite because they have God, not only as their beginning, but also as their end, and God is infinite. Basil calls the angelic kingdom both αἰώνιος, eonic, and ἀΐδιος, eternal.[40] Or rather, this designation is self-evident. In this kingdom ("paradise"), as well as in the kingdom of God, any everlasting being and God himself co-exist. In itself, however, the invisible and noetic world belongs to creation just as the visible world does. Aeonian is also the

35 M. DelCogliano, Basil of Caesarea versus Eunomius of Cyzicus on the Nature of Time: A Patristic Reception of the Critique of Plato, in: *Vigiliae Christianae*, 68 (2014), 522–526 et 530.

36 Basilius Magnus, Homiliae IX in Hexaemeron, 2, 8, in: PG 29, 49C: "ὁ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου φύσιν κατασκευάσας Θεὸς, μέτρα αὐτῷ καὶ σημεῖα τὰ τῶν ἡμερῶν ἐπέβαλε διαστήματα".

37 Basilius Magnus, Homiliae IX in Hexaemeron, 2, 8, in: PG 29, 49C.

38 Basilius Magnus, Homiliae IX in Hexaemeron, 2, 8, in: PG 29, 49CD.

39 M. DelCogliano, Basil of Caesarea versus Eunomius of Cyzicus on the Nature of Time: A Patristic Reception of the Critique of Plato, in: *Vigiliae Christianae*, 68 (2014), 529.

40 В. Цветковић, *Бог и време. Ученье о времену Светог Григорија Ниског*, Ниш 2013 [V. Cvetković, *God and Time: The Teaching on Time of St. Gregory of Nyssa*, Niš 2013—Serbian], 151–152.

"eighth day" which is without evening, without succession and without end (ἀνέσπερος καὶ ἀδιάδοχος καὶ ἀτελεύτητος).[41]

John of Damascus presents several meanings of "aeon," keeping valid Basil's instructive proposition that it is a matter of different states and relations, but not of sequences, constellations, implications, or mutual cancellations. In everyday language, "aeon" means the life of the individual. Thus, it is also called the period of a thousand years, as well as present life in its entirety. Additionally, there is talk of the seven αἰῶνες of this world—from the creation of heaven and earth to the common end and resurrection of people. The eighth day, that is, the future infinite life after the resurrection, is also called this. The state before the creation of the sun is so called "aeon", when it was not a measurable aeon, but something that is describable by a quasi-temporal movement and extension. It is also admitted that aeon is also that which proceeds parallel to the eternal like temporal mobility and extension (οἷόν τι χρονικόν κίνημα καὶ διάστημα). Therefore, God is also called αἰώνιος. But he is also called προαιώνιος, pre-aeonic, because he created the αἰών itself.[42]

God is already called πρὸ αἰῶνος (existing before the aeons) in Basil the Great. God transcends and precedes all aeons, dwelling in His inherent eternity (ἀιδιότης). The community-κοινωνία of divine persons is also eternal, and they mutually unite without any extension (ἀδιαστάτως): their being together is not delimited by any mediator (μηδενὶ μέσῳ). God has not appeared from non-being into being.[43] As ἀδιαστάτος, God differs from every created entity—material or immaterial, temporal or aeonic. Therefore, eternity par excellence is not rewritten by diastemic—temporal or aeonic—terms or predicates. It is rather stated as existence or life of a special kind.

The description, coined by John of Scythopolis in the 6th century, entirely in the spirit of the Cappadocians, states that the eternity of the Creator of the aeons is an infinite life, present in its wholeness, and nothing of it disappears into the past, but lingers and emerges immovable and unchanging as a complete unity. This life emerges outwardly (προεστῶσαν). That is why the actually ἀΐδιος God is also called αἰών, because the aeons—the realm of the noetic and invisible—are created by Him. The aeonian participates in the nondiastemic and infinite life. God, the Timeless, ὁ ἄχρονος, is also called time-χρόνος because He is the one causing time. What the aeon is to the noetic things, time is to sensory things. Time also rested in the Eternal Being and was manifested καθ'

41 Basilius Magnus, Homiliae IX in Hexaemeron, 2, 8, in: PG 29, 52A.

42 Iohannes Damascenus, *Expositio fidei, II, 1*, in: *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, Bd. II, ed. B. Kotter, Berlin–New York 1973 (ed. Kotter 2), *43, 1–44, 38* (*PG 94, 861A–864C*).

43 Basilius Magnus, Contra Eunomium, 2, 12, in: PG 29, 593BC.

ὑπόβασιν—through going outwards, when visible nature was to appear. "Time" is called the procession-πρόοδος of divine goodness-ἀγαθότης into visible things at their creation. The movement of divisions (διαστάσεις) of segments, hours, days, and nights, on the other hand, is not time, but something homonymous with time. The disposer (διατάξας) and causer of the aeons and time dwells super-aeonically and timelessly. About Him one must not say "He was," "is," or "will be"—He is above all that. His being is super-being, transcendent to being—ὑπερουσίως.[44]

The foundations of these assertions, laid down in the 4th century, are positions common to the Cappadocians. Gregory the Theologian mentions the lack of limit and end, and beginninglessness (τὸ ἄπειρον καὶ ἀνέκβατον, ἄναρχον) as characteristics of the divine accessible to our imagination. Immortality and imperishability are indeed typical of it but also of the aeon. The aeon is neither time nor part of time and it cannot be measured. However, it is characterized by a movement akin to temporal movement and extension (οἷόν τι χρονικὸν κίνημα καὶ διάστημα). The everlasting and the temporal are present in the realm of economy and not theology.[45]

Gregory of Nyssa never describes eternity by the word "αἰών." God is without beginning and without end, that is, timeless (ἀχρόνως), and He is the eternity of the aeon (τῶν αἰώνων ἀΐδιότης). God is ἀδιάστατος. "Extension" (διάστημα) is the hallmark common to time and the aeon. Gregory goes as far as to say that "διάστημα is nothing other than the creation itself". The aeon is limited by a διάστημα that extends with it: the aeon has its beginning and its limit—πέρας. By the term "διάστημα" the distinction is drawn between created and uncreated. The διάστημα in the realm of the physical is different in principle from the διάστημα belonging to the aeon. On the eighth day, the physical διάστημα, the horizontal, fails; in contrast, the vertical, the spiritual, remains present.[46] Physical or natural διάστημα is an ontological gulf between the Creator and us. In this world, we are separated from God by temporal extension. Everything

44 Glossa ad De divinis nominibus, 5, 4, in: PG 4, 313D–316AC. Cf. D. Bradshaw, Divine Freedom: The Greek Fathers and the Modern Debate, in: *Philosophical theology and the Christian traditions: Russian and Western perspectives*, ed. D. Bradshaw, Washington 2012, 90–92.

45 Gregorius Theologus, Orationes, 38, 8, in PG 36, 320AB. Cf. D. Bradshaw, Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers, in: *The Thomist* 70 (2006), 338; M. DelCogliano, Basil of Caesarea versus Eunomius of Cyzicus on the Nature of Time: A Patristic Reception of the Critique of Plato, in: *Vigiliae Christianae*, 68 (2014), 523.

46 В. Цветковић, *Бог и време. Ученье о времену Светог Григорија Ниског*, Ниш 2013 [V. Cvetković, *God and Time: The Teaching on Time of St. Gregory of Nyssa*, Niš 2013—Serbian], 241–262. Cf. D. Bradshaw, Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers, in: *The Thomist* 70 (2006), 335–336.

that exists in time is created and has a place in the temporal order. It is related either to the beginning of time, or to other temporal beings and events, or to the end of the world and the second coming of Christ.[47]

The Cappadocians formulated the crucial points of the Byzantine understanding of time. The divisive term is extension-διάστημα. It separates the two major spheres: God is not diastemic and creation—the realm of the intelligible and the visible cosmos—is diastemic. Divine eternity, which is around God—God is eternity and at the same time he transcends eternity (for this reason created beings could actually participate in eternity)[48]—is attainable by humans only by means of their imagination. The realm of the extensive, on the other hand, is recognizable, whereby time and the aeon have no causal relationship with movement. They are conditioned by the existence of creation.[49]

3 Maximus the Confessor

For Maximus the Confessor, too, the availability or the lack of διάστημα is the decisive criterion for distinguishing between the everlasting and temporal, on the one hand, and eternity on the other. The marvelous greatness of divine limitlessness, of θεία ἀπειρία, is something that has no quantity, is indivisible, and completely non-extensive (παντελῶς ἀδιάστατον). The unknowability of the divine essence is also based on this. Truth is God, around whom the intellect-νοῦς moves ceaselessly and without forgetting (ἀλήστως), without ever being able to cease its movement, because there is no limit to be found where there is no extension (μὴ εὑρίσκων πέρας ἔνθα μὴ ἔστι διάστημα). In no way is it possible to comprehend the limit of something that has no διάστημα.[50] The eternal

47 V. Cvetkovic, St Gregory's argument concerning the lack of διάστημα in the divine activities from Ad Ablabium, in: *Gregory of Nyssa: the minor treatises on trinitarian theology and Apollinarism*, eds. V.H. Drecoll, M. Berghau, Leiden–Boston 2011, 373.

48 Cf. D. Bradshaw, Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers, in: *The Thomist* 70 (2006), 320–321 et 353.

49 Cf. D. Bradshaw, Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers, in: *The Thomist* 70 (2006), 341–342; B.F. Gallaher, Chalice of Eternity: An Orthodox Theology of Time, in: *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 57:1 (2013), 14; G. Florovsky, Creation and Creaturehood, in: *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky, Vol. III: Creation and Redemption*, Belmont, Massachusetts 1976, 43.

50 Maximus Confessor, Mystagogia, in: PG 91, 677A. Cf. L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator. The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, Chicago 1995, 57–60, S. Mitralexis, *Ever-Moving Repose. The Notion of Time in Maximus the Confessor's Philosophy through the Perspective of a Relational Ontology. Dissertation*, Berlin 2014, 156.

God, the Creator of the aeons and times, fills everything with His eternal light (φῶς ἀΐδιος) through the rays of His goodness.[51] God exists eternally as Creator, and He creates when He wills, in His infinite goodness, through His co-essential Logos and Spirit.[52] But creation takes place "now" (νῦν), even if one could have expected it to take place from eternity because of God's goodness.[53] Everything created by God, i.e. the nature of beings and time (ἡ φύσις τῶν ὄντων καὶ τὸν χρόνον), when God appears in any form, shows itself together with Him because He is its cause and creator.[54]

At the same time, Maximus distinguishes between eternity and the aeon. Eternity remains entirely indifferent to everything diastemic—both everlasting and temporal. Conversely, he sees kinship between the latter two. Time becomes an aeon when movement ceases, and the aeon becomes time when it is measured as carried by movement; its "eternity" is by no means identified with divine eternity or conceived as analogous to it. The definition of Maximus is: "The aeon is time deprived of motion, whereas time is an aeon measured by motion".[55]

The aeon as meant in this definition is the totality of the duration of creation, the entire time span in which created being is present. It is the totality of time and, in this sense, it is the "eternity" of times, in which they are all simultaneously enclosed and therefore immovable. This "eternity" is identical with the overall history of the created world in its existence between the point of its creation and its end, conceived in its total unity. This aeon is the integral quantitative and qualitative concentration of time.

Reflecting on created beings and the aeons in general, Maximus notes that they are moving and circumscribable, being determined by the principle-λόγος of quiddity, quality and qualified being (πῶς εἶναι). Everything that is moving and created has a beginning and is temporary in an absolute sense, although—Maximus emphasizes—there is also such a time that is not measurable by movement. The emphasis falls on time-conditioned existence. It is a time in which the existent begins to be, and it is an extension-διάστημα since it begins

51 Maximus Confessor, Ambigua ad Ioannem, 46, in: PG 91, 1357B.

52 Capita de caritate, 4, 3, in: PG 90, 1048C: „Ἐξ ἀϊδίου δημιουργὸς ὑπάρχων ὁ Θεὸς, ὅτε βούλεται δημιουργεῖ λόγῳ ὁμοουσίῳ καὶ πνεύματι δι' ἄπειρον ἀγαθότητα".

53 Cf. T.T. Tollefsen, *The Christian Metaphysics of St. Maximus the Confessor: Creation, World-Order, and Redemption*, Turnhout 2023, 106–107.

54 Maximus Confessor, Ambigua ad Ioannem, 10, 9, in: PG 91, 1164A.

55 Ibid., in: PG 91, 1164C. Cf. S. Mitralexis, *Ever-Moving Repose. The Notion of Time in Maximus the Confessor's Philosophy through the Perspective of a Relational Ontology. Dissertation*, Berlin 2014, 189–195.

to be. Everything that is and is in motion is subject to nature and time. But in one sense it is subject to time by movement and in another sense by being—by its existence.[56]

In the second sense, the action of the natural or essential energies is meant first of all. The presence and intensity of existence, that is, the expression of energies, unfold in time, but they are not movement in the general meaning of the word and they are actually not to be measured by movement. Just reflecting on the relationship between movement and stasis, Maximus circumscribes the profile of "movement" more sharply and draws a distinction between two modes: between "movement" par excellence (κίνησις) and "carrying" (φορά). Movement is specific to everything subject to generation and corruption. In these, "more" and "less" can be observed.

"Carrying", on the other hand, means the "circling" of the essence, the "immovable movement", which fixes the structure of the being. In it are constituted its nature, power, and energy (οὐσία, δύναμις, ἐνέργεια), its unchanging order and sufficiency of being (τάξις καὶ διαμονή), as well as its unchanging natural properties. Indeed, the principles-λόγοι of things and their action in things are to be distinguished.[57] The immutable "law of the natural" works in the dynamics of existence and therefore enters into relations with movement. At least the non-measurability of existential activity by movement remains valid.

Time and movement, generally meant as change, do not stand in any necessary being-correspondence. Sensible and temporal things are created in matter. Materiality was given to Adam as a mediator to look at the spiritual through his spiritual eye. But he remained in the realm of the material, which separated him from his spiritual core. Such materiality is transient and perishable. By his detachment from God, Adam brings forth death for himself and his descendants. He himself has brought forward death "for the whole time of the present temporal duration" (κατὰ πάντα τὸν χρόνον τοῦ παρόντος καιροῦ). Death lives in the course of the whole of this temporal extension (ὁ θάνατος ζῇ δι' ὅλου τοῦ χρονικοῦ τούτου διαστήματος). It persists permanently (ἀεί)—throughout the entire aeon of this world.[58] The time of the created cosmos is historical time.

The aeon or the aeons of intelligible natures also have their history. These beings are created, they have a beginning to their being, and their duration has its own διάστημα.[59] Historical time does not necessarily presuppose movement as it is not to be measured obligatorily by movement. But it entails the unfold-

56 Maximus Confessor, Ambigua ad Ioannem, 67, in: PG 91, 1397AB.
57 Ibid., 15, in: PG 91, 1216D–1217C.
58 Ibid., 10, 28, in: PG 91, 1156C–1157A.
59 Ibid., 67, in: PG 91, 1397B.

ing of events, in which the modes of existence of the natures of the created may change or transform. The interaction and interrelation between the constant principles of essences and the varying modes of existence of natures in the course of historical time are made possible thanks to the incarnate Principle of principles.

Jesus Christ receives the whole of being, the whole of time and all aeons. However, in Him, they are present in a completely different way than in their contingent existence. In Him, their Creator and cause, they are present in eternity according to their *logoi*. Both the aeon and time are "suspended" in their eternal *logoi* and therefore in the eternal divine Logos,[60] who himself became human and thus a historical figure. God is eternity *par excellence*. Through the ray of His creative energies, He introduces non-being into being and sets the beginning of the lifetimes or the aeons, embracing and constituting their entire course and end. The wholeness and the completion of all aeons is the finalization of their history. At the same time, however, the cosmos is also penetrated by natural divine energies, God's own existence, the eternal light. The divine goodness given in this way fills the entire created cosmos with all its aeons. The worthy among the people, the deified in their existence, are also filled by this light. The "limitedness" of God through humanity in the God-man makes possible the analogical dwelling of man as the mediatorial being and figure of time and the aeons.[61]

4 Michael Psellus

After the work on conceptualizing time, as well as the aeonic and eternity, done by Greek-speaking Christian thinkers, from the Cappadocians to Maximus the Confessor, their findings were accepted as generally valid. There are almost no attempts to doubt their determinations or to go beyond them. The descriptive list of meanings of "aeon" and the meager account of time and eternity in John Damascene are symptomatic in this regard.[62] The same is valid for the systematic work of Gregory Palamas. He devotes the first 29 chapters of his *150 chapters* to describing the contingent world and the manner of its cognition. In the first

60 Ibid., 10, 9, in: PG 91, 1164AB.

61 Ibid., 46, in: PG 91, 1357BC.

62 Iohannes Damascenus, *Expositio* accurata *fidei orthodoxae, II, 1, in*: ed. Kotter 2, *43–44* (*PG 94, 861A–864C*); *Dialectica, 55*, in: *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, Bd. 1, ed. B. Kotter, Berlin 1969 (ed. Kotter 1), 124 (*PG 94, 641C*); *Expositio* accurata *fidei orthodoxae, II, 3, ed*. Kotter 2, *46, 21–24* (*PG 94, 868B*).

chapter he is already content to explain that the world and time come into being together, as Moses recorded it.[63] The nature of time is not commented on at all. Shortly thereafter, it is noticed that celestial bodies move perpetually (ἀεί) and self-determined bodies (αὐθαίρετα) move differently at different times.[64] Much later—amid a controversy regarding divine energies—it is emphasized that God rules over creatures in time and aeon and over the aeons themselves (ἐν χρόνῳ καὶ ἐν αἰῶνι καὶ αὐτῶν τῶν αἰώνων) through His uncreated energy, which differs from His essence.[65] It should be pointed out that the terms are used without any discussion of the peculiarity of the nature of time, aeon, and eternity. Their definitions are put to use as self-explanatory.

Worthy of note within this horizon are the reflections of Michael Psellus in this respect. In his pseudo-pedagogical work *De omnifaria doctrina*, he regenerates the Aristotelian-Plotinian notion of time as a mental concept. Time is a human thought, concept, and name. Time is neither a self-existent thing, nor a visible body, nor some disembodied hypostasis, but just something (πρᾶγμα) existing solely in thought. The philosophers, insists Psellus, have designated time as a measure of the motion of beings arising and passing away under motion. These beings arising and passing away are contrasted with perpetual beings (αἰώνια), whose being is everlasting (ἀεί) and immobile.[66] It is the comparison with the aeonic that nudges Psellus into recognizing time as having determinations of being as well. By considering that the εἶδος of the human being has his origin-γέννησις in the ἄπειρον, but begins his actual being in the completeness of time-καιρός,[67] Psellus introduces the dimension of time-χρόνος that is fundamental to humanity and its ways of knowing.

In his reflection on aeon and time (περὶ αἰῶνος καὶ χρόνου), Psellus remarks: The bodiless being has an aeonic essence and energy, like the intellect (νοῦς). Its essence is immovable and its energy is unchangeable. By its essence, heaven is aeonic, but by its motion, it is subject (κείμενος) to time. The bodies have both essence and energy in time, ἔγχρονος. This applies to our body as well. The soul is aeonic through its essence, but through its energy, it participates (μετέχει) in time.[68] Its energy is according to time (κατὰ χρόνον) and follows

63 Gregorius Palamas, Capita 150, 1, in: *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ Συγγράμματα*, τ. 5, επιμ. Π. Χρήστου, Θεσσαλονίκη 1992 (ed. Christou v), 37, 6–8.

64 Ibid., 3, in: ed. Christou v, 38, 14–19.

65 Ibid., 125, in: ed. Christou v, 106, 5–8.

66 Michael Psellus, De omnifaria doctrina, 102, in: *Michael Psellus. De omnifaria doctrina. Critical Text and Introduction*, ed. L.G. Westerink, Nijmegen 1948 (ed. Westerink), 57–58.

67 Ibid., 20, in: ed. Westerink, 26.

68 Ibid., 107, in: ed. Westerink, 59.

from time (τὰ τούτοις ἀκόλουθα).[69] In the soul, aeon and time are in mutual connection. But the aeon is the paradigm of time. It is supra-temporal and knows no change. In it dwell identity, goodness, justice, and similar bases, which are immovable.[70]

While aeon and time are clearly, albeit asymmetrically, related, divine eternity is incommensurable with them. The difference is drawn by answering the question of whether and how the Divine (τὸ θεῖον) is infinite (ἄπειρον). Unlike the whole of creation, God is not a quantity but a true One (κυρίως ἕν). He has no size and is bodiless. His activity (ἐνέργεια) is not limited by any boundary, and all His energies and powers are infinite and non-exhaustive. He is infinite according to His principle and His goal. He is not subject to principle (ἄναρχος) and not limited (ἀτελεύτητον), and He is the universe of aeons (ζύμπαν αἰώνιον).[71] God is eternal (ἀΐδιος), His state is eternity (ἀιδιότης).[72]

Nevertheless, eternity is not totally separated from aeon and time. Nature is a universal mediator of eternity in creation. Unlike other Byzantine philosophers, and as already mentioned, Psellus differentiates between essence-οὐσία and nature-φύσις. While "essence" denotes the being-constitution of the being, "nature" signifies a particular power-δύναμις, which is infused by God into bodies, that is, into their elements and compounds.[73] As an instrument of God (ὄργανον τοῦ θεοῦ), it is the constituting form through which the natural thing takes shape and becomes a genuine φυσικόν.[74] Another mediating instance is the structure of the noetic.

The first, supercosmic, non-participating, and demiurgic νοῦς is "πάντων ὑποστάτης"—the supporter of all things. It lays the foundation for the inherent and immutable, as well as the mutable and temporal, in everything that exists. It creates "everything at once in an instant (ἐν μιᾷ ῥοπῇ σύμπαντα)." The beings come forth according to their genera and specifics: some by virtue of noetic property, others by virtue of psychic mediation, others by virtue of physical motion.[75] The soul is capable of participating in the intra-cosmic intellect (ἐγκόσμιος νοῦς), which follows the first intellect and is participating in it.[76] The participating intellect (ὁ μεθεκτός νοῦς) that follows the non-participating

69 Ibid., 52, in: ed. Westerink, 38.
70 Ibid., Appendix II, in: ed. Westerink, 102–104.
71 Ibid., 16, in: ed. Westerink, 24.
72 Ibid., 15, in: ed. Westerink, 24, 9.
73 Ibid, 57, in: ed. Westerink, 40.
74 L. Benakis, Ein unedierter Kommentar zur *Physik* des Aristoteles von Michael Psellos, in: L. Benakis, *Texts and Studies on Byzantine Philosophy I*, Athens 2002, 364.
75 De omnifaria doctrina, 24, in: ed. Westerink, 27.
76 Ibid., 21, in: ed. Westerink, 26.

intellect possesses both the first intellect and the insight (εἴδησις) of everything understandable. The non-participating intellect grants to the νόες under it a revealing imprint (ἔμφασις) of its own existence. Based on this, in accordance with the measure of their own nature, they recognize both intelligible and sensitive things according to their own causes.[77]

Psellus's approach to time manifests two things. It is not difficult to see that he does not actually coin any innovative or different determinations of time, aeon, and eternity.[78] Thus, at the same time, he demonstrates virtuosity, and not only in their determination and differentiation. His approach is also virtuoso-like in bringing the togetherness of the temporal, the aeonic and the eternal, the dynamic network woven by them and their asymmetrical, but nevertheless unified interaction into view.

5 System of the Interaction of Structures

As a first step here, the firm coherence between time, place, and comprehending thought (understanding, κατάληψις) should be noted. In his groundbreaking consideration "On the Place of God and on the Fact that Only the Divine is Indescribable (ἀπερίγραπτον),"[79] John of Damascus, following Maximus' concept of a "space-time continuum,"[80] establishes that the being which can be defined by place or time, or as encompassed in comprehension, is to be determined as being "subject to description (περιγραπτόν)". Indescribable is that which is not determinable in any of these ways.[81] Thus, the boundary between diastemic and non-diastemic is sharply drawn. In the following, the systematic connection of their structures is explained.

77 Ibid., 25, in: ed. Westerink, 28.

78 This is confirmed by the other texts of Psellus published by Linos Benakis specifically dedicated to time and the aeon (also dealing with the theme of eternity). There Psellus describes rigorously and exhaustively the characteristics of them already fixed before him, quoting most of all Gregory the Theologian, but also Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus (especially copiously), Porphyrius, Proclus, Simplicius, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa. He adds no conceptual corrections to the known definitions—cf. Λ. Μπενάκης, Χρόνος καὶ αἰών. Ἀντιπαράθεση ἑλληνικῆς καὶ χριστιανικῆς διδασκαλίας στὸ ἀνέκδοτο ἔργο τοῦ Μιχαὴλ Ψελλοῦ [Time and Eternity: A Comparison of Greek and Christian Teachings in the Unpublished Work of Michael Psellus], in: L. Benakis, *Texts and Studies on Byzantine Philosophy I*, Ἀθήνα 2002, 463–486.

79 Johannes Damascenus, *Expositio* fidei, I, 13, in: ed. Kotter 2, 37 (PG 94, 849B–860A).

80 Cf. S. Mitralexis, *Ever-Moving Repose. The Notion of Time in Maximus the Confessor's Philosophy through the Perspective of a Relational Ontology. Dissertation*, Berlin 2014, 172–181.

81 Ibid., in: ed. Kotter 2, 39, 42–46 (PG 94, 853B).

Firstly, the difference and congruence between the various forms of the describable based on their local determinations should be outlined. Bodily place (τόπος σωματικός) is the limit of the surrounded (πέρας τοῦ περιέχοντος).[82] Bodies are each described according to their beginning and end, according to their physical location and as conceptually graspable.[83] Alongside this, there is the intellectual place (νοητός τόπος), where noetic and incorporeal nature resides. It has no figure (σχῆμα) and cannot be bodily surrounded.[84] Angels are said to occupy a place because they dwell noetically and act according to their nature. But angels are also described according to time, because they have received a beginning to their being, and according to place, as well as being graspable intellectually. They are circumscribed at their place of action.[85] The common connection and interpenetration of the somatic and noetic, simultaneously determined spatially, temporally and conceptually, are recognized as a common network through the specifics of their effect and interaction.

Only God is able to act simultaneously and everywhere.[86] The Divine is indivisible, it is completely everywhere, in everything and above everything.[87] Because God is non-material and indescribable, He could not be bound in one place alone. He is Himself place, in that He fills everything, is exalted above everything and holds everything together. The Divine has determined everything that does not depend on us, assigning it its appropriate and corresponding place and time. Nevertheless, it is said that God is also in a place: wherever His energy is manifested. He penetrates unmixed through everything and communicates His energy to everything—according to its nature and receptivity. God's place, therefore, means that which participates in His energy and grace to a higher degree. Everything is distant from God, not by place, but by nature.[88] That God, who is invisible by His nature, becomes visible through His energies, we recognize through the constitution of the world and its guidance.[89] God, whose energy composes, directs and permeates the world, is also actively located in this network. He participates in it. However, it is not a matter of a homogeneous presence: the energy of God reveals

82 Ibid., in: ed. Kotter 2, 37, 2 (PG 94, 849C).
83 Ibid., in: ed. Kotter 2, 39, 49–50 (PG 94, 853B).
84 Ibid., in: ed. Kotter 2, 37, 7–38, 1 (PG 94, 852A).
85 Ibid., in: ed. Kotter 2, 38, 30–39, 36 (PG 94, 853A).
86 Ibid., in: ed. Kotter 2, 39, 43–46 (PG 94, 853B).
87 Ibid., in: ed. Kotter 2, 38, 27–29 (PG 94, 852C).
88 Ibid., in: ed. Kotter 2, 38, 9–26 (PG 94, 852AC).
89 Ibid., in: ed. Kotter 2, 40, 73–74 (PG 94, 856B).

itself not with uniform intensity. It resides with regard not only to the differences in natures but also to the unique capacity for reception of individual hypostases.

The "place" thus meant is not a point where nature is present, but a center of natural activity (ἐνεργεῖ) and a reference to its noetic apprehension. "Place" is understood in terms of a noetic concentration of being's activity (action, ἐνέργεια) that irreversibly engages existence. The temporality of the corporeal world is not static. Local and temporal extensions are given to every created being as determinants of its hypostatic existence. God enters into a being relationship with the world: the divine energy permeates the created world. The place of God is the limit of His activity in the created world, His presence in the existence of the created, which in a special way dwells in the existence of those who willingly accept Him. All places and times of created things are localizations of divine energy.[90] Through its relational concept, Damascene further insists that cosmic space gains its significance as God's place. It is not measured as a conventional distance between objects. The cosmos gives space to the mutual relationship between God and man without abolishing or annulling the distance separating uncreated from created nature.[91]

The network of relations, which is unfolded by the being together of time, place and comprehension, does not have an abstract character at any point. It is permanently present, because it is the actual history of the cosmos and of mankind. Everything, including time, has its origin in the divine λόγοι-principles: the beginning point of the created being's movement does not belong to the trajectory of the movement itself. This beginning is the divine *logos* of the created, which is not the created being itself.[92] The λόγοι, universal and specific, not only for the essences, properties, etc., but also for local situating, time and movement,[93] are pure dynamics carried by causative divine energies and are in permanent correspondence with the whole network of energies.

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90 S. Markov, *Die metaphysische Synthese des Johannes von Damaskus: Historische Zusammenhänge und Strukturtransformationen*, Leiden–Boston 2015, 127–129.

91 S. Tanev, The Concept of Energy in T.F. Torrance and in Orthodox Theology, in: *Participatio. The Journal of the Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship*, 4 (2013), 210.

92 В. Лурье, *История византийской философии—Формативный период*, Санкт Петербург 2006 [B.M. Lourié, *The History of Byzantine Philosophy: The Formative Period*, St. Petersburg 2006—Russian], 372.

93 Cf. Maximus Confessor, Epistulae, 12, in: PG 91, 485D; Ambigua ad Ioannem, 7; 15; 17, in: PG 91, 1217AB; 1228A–1229A; 1080A; 1245B.

6 Concluding Observation

In a brief concluding observation, it must first be affirmed that the central innovation of the Eastern Christian understanding of time, aeon, and eternity as divine processions lies in the fact that they are not merely parallel and distinct, but genetically interconnected.[94] Their connectedness does not cancel out the difference between adiastemic and diastemic in the created cosmos. In this context, it should be recalled that they are affirmed as an extension of the entire cosmos, as well as innumerable sets of concrete extensions which form the course of time. The aeon of the cosmos differs from the aeons of the noetic natures with their extensions and stands in a dynamic relationship with them. But it should not be forgotten that the beginning of time has an adiastemic character. The nature of the beginning-ἀρχή of time includes in itself significant properties of the aeonic and the eternal. Time, aeon and eternity form a network in this world in which they operate and are together in a common dynamic. It is the network of the world history, which will be removed only after the end of the world.

This network is not to be determined as substantial at all. It is not constituted by a causal structure and corresponding processes. It is the network of existence. Abraham Joshua Heschel explains that religious philosophy does not consider the proceedings in the world as causal structures, but as events.[95] In the case of Byzantine understanding one should think about event-συμβάν—coming together, convening. In the terms of Heschel we may say that that which has happened in the "time-aeon-eternity" system is not a causal effect and not a separated and rigid moment, but a dynamic extension—a happening.[96]

94 D. Bradshaw, Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers, in: *The Thomist*, 70 (2006), 360.
95 A.J. Heschel, *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism*, New York ^{6}1994, 16–17.
96 Cf. G. Kapriev, Structures of Time in Byzantine Philosophy, in: *Analogia*, 21 (2024), 25–48.

CHAPTER 8

History and Metaphysics

1 Political Thought and Historiography

1.1 *Political Thought*

In Byzantium, no textual foundation for political theology or philosophy in the strict sense of these concepts can be identified. Political praxis in the Eastern Roman Empire offers examples of spontaneous or deliberate functionalizations of religious elements according to political motivations and goals, as Carl Schmitt notes.[1] In some cases theological positions are used (or even misused) in the political field. But Schmitt attributes a narrower definition to the term "political theology". It is generally acknowledged that, in Byzantium, political thought does not unfold as a self-dependent philosophical discipline; the interest shown towards political topics is much weaker than that shown towards other issues of theoretical philosophy.[2]

Crucial to the topic is the distinction between imperial ideology and theoretical political thought.[3] The so-called βασιλικὴ ἐπιστήμη, "royal science," which is normally molded in panegyrics and "mirrors for princes", cannot be justifiably added to the sphere of philosophy and philosophical literature. This "science" is in fact a propagandistic imperial concept, using a standard rhetorical and ideological repertoire. Indeed, this ideology has evolved over the centuries; it is not a stable structure. Tracing its evolution is not the task of this text. It will be enough to note that among the constant attributes of this ideology are the justification of the political idea of the "rights" of the emperor and the portrayal of the ideal ruler and his government, whereby "royal science" does not differentiate between "imperial" and "political."[4]

1 Cf. C. Schmitt, *Political Theology II. The Myth of the Closure of any Political Theology*, transl. by M. Hoelzl, G. Ward, Cambridge 2008, 83 [original title: C. Schmitt, *Politische Theologie II. Die Legende von der Erledigung einer politischen Theologie*, Berlin 1970].

2 Cf. D. Angelov, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium, 1204–1330*, Cambridge 2007, 8; D. Angelov, *The Many Faces of Byzantine Philosophy*, eds. B. Bydén, K. Ierodiakonou, Athens 2012, 46. I think that the monograph of Dimiter Angelov is the most complete study on this topic to date. In this chapter I will often be referring to this study, as well to the article quoted in which Angelov develops further his preliminary observations from the monograph.

3 D. Angelov, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium*, Cambridge 2007, 1.

4 D. Angelov, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium, 1204–1330*, Cambridge 2007, 9–10; 29–180; Id., Classifications of Political Philosophy, in: *The Many Faces of Byzantine Phi-*

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It should be noted that this "science" does not incorporate so-called caesaropapism, which is an ideological figure, used as an exception, as for example in (the much favored by Schmitt[5]) Eusebius of Caesarea or Emperor Leo III.[6] The model of relations between secular and ecclesial authority, promoted by "royal science", is formulated as συμφωνία, i.e. as concord, the action of two synergetic powers in structuring the one Christian universe. The preamble to Justinian's sixth novel is prescriptive in this respect: There are two principles of power in the world, kingship and the priesthood, which have one common source, namely Christ, and they work in close cooperation and in union with each other. Kingship relates to human deeds, the priesthood deals with religious life and the divine. Similar formulations are to be found in legislative collections and historiographical texts from all periods of Byzantine history. Nevertheless, in the 4th century some ecclesiastics already stress the supremacy of ecclesial over secular power, pointing to the domination of the spirit over the body. Among these authors one can differentiate radical and moderate hierocrats.[7]

1.2 *The Ancient* Politeia *and Byzantine Erudition*

Expecting political philosophy to be widely present in Byzantine tradition is an optical illusion. The latter is due to the fact that at least since the 7th century onwards, the texts and main ideas of Aristotle and Plato were part of the Byzantine general educational curriculum. For both Plato and Aristotle politics is an

losophy, eds. B. Bydén, K. Ierodiakonou, Athens 2012, 35 and 45; Г.Г. Литаврин, Политическая теория в Византии с середины VII до начала XIII в., in: *Культура Византии. Вторая половина VII–XII в.*, сост. З.В. Удальцова, Г.Г. Литаврин, Москва 1989 [G.G. Litavrin, Political Theory in Byzantium from the Mid-7th to the Early 13th Century, in: *The Culture of Byzantium: The Second Half of the 7th–12th Centuries*, eds. Z.V. Udaltsova, G.G. Litavrin, Moscow 1989—Russian], 71 and 88.

5 Cf. C. Schmitt, *Political Theology II*, Cambridge 2008, 79–102.

6 Cf. G. Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre. Études sur le «césaropapisme» byzantine*, Paris 1996, *passim*.

7 H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachige profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, Bd. 1, München 1978, 218–234; Г.Г. Литаврин, Политическая теория в Византии с середины VII до начала XIII в., в: *Культура Византии. Вторая половина VII–XII в.*, сост. З.В. Удальцова, Г.Г. Литаврин, Москва 1989 [G.G. Litavrin, Political Theory in Byzantium from the Mid-7th to the Early 13th Century, in: *The Culture of Byzantium: The Second Half of the 7th–12th Centuries*, eds. Z.V. Udaltsova, G.G. Litavrin, Moscow 1989—Russian], 68; М. Хронц, 'Света София' в Константинопол и императорската литургия, в: *Архив за средновековна философия и култира*, 5 (1998) [M. Chronz, ‚Hagia Sophia' in Constantinople and the Imperial Liturgy—Bulgarian], 42–76; D. Angelov, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium*, Cambridge 2007, 361–362 and 374–416.

autonomous discipline within practical philosophy. Its bipartite division into legislative and judicial in Plato presupposes a stronger focusing on the political.[8] However, it plays some kind of role for only a few authors: Michael Psellus,[9] Nicephorus Blemmydes, Theodore Metochites,[10] or Plethon, for instance.[11] Aristotle's tripartite division of ethics, economics, and politics is universally accepted, legitimized not least by the authority of John Damascene. As part of Aristotle's corpus, the work *Politics* is widespread, but it is used only for textbook and antiquarian purposes without being creatively interpreted and further developed. It does not serve as a base for philosophical theorizing.[12] This is due to both the incompatibility of ancient political speculation with the political context in Byzantium and the discrepancy between political activity and the Byzantine philosophical ethos.

It is not by chance that there is only one commentary on Aristotle's *Politics* throughout the entire Byzantine period. The commentary of Michael of Ephesus, preserved nowadays only in fragments, was the result of a patron's order. The commentary is superficial, descriptive and its author is not disposed towards genuine theoretical concepts. The interconnection between political thought and contemporary social reality, which is normally taken for granted by Byzantine intellectuals, is only slightly alluded to through sketchy critiques of the rule of the Komnenoi.[13]

The Byzantine political situation has nothing in common with the polis setup interpreted by ancient philosophers. With only a few notable exceptions,[14] the Byzantines identify πολιτεία with the empire. The rigid monarchical system has no alternative and the center of power is exclusively personified by the emperor. All the rest are his subjects: οἱ ὑπὸ χεῖρα—they are in his hands.

8 Cf. D. O'Meara, The Justinianic dialogue "*On Political Science*" and its Neoplatonic sources, in: *Byzantine Philosophy and Its Ancient Sources*, ed. K. Ierodiakonou, Oxford 2002, 56–58.

9 In any case for him political speculation is the most insignificant part of philosophy.

10 He is the only one to state that political philosophy is the best part of philosophy and that it is regrettably neglected.

11 Plethon is not merely a radical Platonist, he is more and more strongly distancing himself from Christianity and he eventually ends up with some form of paganism. Therefore, his views are not a subject for this analysis.

12 Cf. D. Angelov, Classifications of Political Philosophy, in: *The Many Faces of Byzantine Philosophy*, eds. B. Bydén, K. Ierodiakonou, Athens 2012, 25–28 and 45.

13 Cf. *Aristotelis Politica*, ed. O. Immisch, Leipzig 1929, 294–327.

14 Cf. V. Syros, Between Chimera and Charybdis: Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Views on the Political Organization of the Italian City-States, in: *Journal of Early Modern History*, 14 (2010), 453–457.

This also applies to those involved in the governance of the state, along with their positions and privileges. "Βασιλεύς" and "πολιτικός," "emperor" and "statesman," become synonymous concepts.[15] Michael of Ephesus also automatically identifies these figures: he speaks of "ὄρεξις βασιλικὴ καὶ πολιτική"—imperial and political desire.[16]

1.3 *Politics and Philosophical Ethos*

It is commonly accepted that political theory is a domain reserved for political practitioners, whereas political philosophy is obliged to refer to actual human life and its conditions, including its imperfections.[17] This notion determines the detached position of Byzantine philosophers regarding direct reflection on politics. This distancing results from the very ethos of philosophizing.

Patriarch Photius strongly emphasizes that the Savior, Christ, did not give orders for any form of political government; the latter is determined by human praxis, namely the necessities of living and human needs. In the same passage, he juxtaposes the political and philosophical ways of life: only the latter is compatible with salvation.[18] As previously mentioned, Patriarch Gregory II identifies the life of the philosopher with the life of the free person (ἐλεύθερος) in his autobiographical essay. Philosophy is the happy and blessed life in which human perfection is realized. In contrast, public occupations are seen as an undesired necessity.[19] Philosophy is identical with free life beyond public life. The duty to serve the state is seen as an act, extrinsic to philosophical theory.[20] In his commentary on *Politics* Michael of Ephesus takes care to point out that the intellect (νοῦς) by nature possesses supremacy over imperial and political aspirations; he draws a difference between political and theoretical εὐδαιμονία, clearly favoring the latter.[21]

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15 Cf. D. Angelov, Classifications of Political Philosophy, in: *The Many Faces of Byzantine Philosophy*, eds. B. Bydén, K. Ierodiakonou, Athens 2012, 28–31.

16 *Aristotelis Politica*, ed. O. Immisch, Leipzig 1929, 294, 25–26.

17 Cf. D. Angelov, Classifications of Political Philosophy, in: *The Many Faces of Byzantine Philosophy*, eds. B. Bydén, K. Ierodiakonou, Athens 2012, 26 and 33–34.

18 Photius, Amphilochiae, 101, in: PG 101, 625BD.

19 *The Autobiography of George of Cyprus* (*Ecumenical Patriarch Gregory II*), *ed.* A. Pelendrides, Nicosia 1993, 38, 236–240, 272 [this edition follows the Greek text, published in: W. Lameere, *La tradition manuscrite de la correspondance de Grégoire de Chypre, patriarche de Constantinople* (*1283–1289*), Bruxelles 1937, 177–191].

20 Cf. H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachige profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, Band 1, München 1978, 375.

21 *Aristotelis Politica*, ed. O. Immisch, Leipzig 1929, 294, 25–26 et 303, 18–20.

The stated distancing of Byzantine philosophers from the political and the absence of specialized political-philosophical texts do not imply a complete lack of political and philosophical interest in political ideas and theories.[22] Philosophical reflection on the political is extensively articulated in a seemingly non-philosophical genre: historiography.

1.4 *Historiography and Philosophical Thought*

Historiography is only seemingly peripheral to philosophy. As a matter of fact, history is not part of Aristotle's corpus of philosophical knowledge. However, it is no coincidence that several among the most prominent Byzantine historiographers are specialized philosophers. No less a historian than Eusebius of Caesarea is a devoted follower of Origen; Theodoret of Cyrrhus and Patriarch Nicephorus I are not unimportant theologians; and, after Michael Psellus a philosopher would deal with historiography as a matter of course. It is symptomatic that Dimiter Angelov, who considers historiographers primarily as critics of the imperial idea, but not as philosophers of history and politics, mentions five prominent historiographers of the 13th and 14th centuries altogether,[23] four of whom (George Akropolites, George Pachymeres, Nikephorus Gregoras and John Kantakousenos) are distinguished philosophers, while the probable author of the *Synoptic chronicle*, Theodore Skutariotis, about whom little is known, continues Akropolites' chronicle. The historiographical activity of philosophers arises from the altered conceptual background of philosophical thinking. The interconnection "history-metaphysics" is of utmost importance for Byzantine philosophy. It is its pivotal notion. Metaphysics is based on historicity.

Byzantine historiography (especially during the so called Middle and Late Byzantine periods) is based on this fundamental position. No doubt, it consists "mostly of narratives of imperial history, focused on the person of the emperor, whereas social, economic and also ecclesial affairs play a minor role,"[24] it is equally true that historians adhere to a view of history formed by fundamental Christian principles, without abandoning the rational analysis of processes. History is interpreted from the perspective of providence and therefore divine intervention in the course of events is explicitly marked; even the selection of historical material follows this interpretative pattern.[25] The pillars of this think-

22 D. Angelov, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium, 1204–1330*, Cambridge 2007, 9.

23 Ibid., 252–256.

24 P. Schreiner, *Byzanz*, München, ²1994, 86.

25 Cf. H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, Bd. 1, München 1978, 243–278.

ing are the creation, the incarnation of the Logos, and the end of the world, as well as human freedom and participation. Themes of this kind provide a philosophical perspective on politics as well.

1.5 *Political Thought and Philosophy*

The absence of specialized treatises on political philosophy does not mean that philosophical thinking is not a basis—a sustainable one—for political thought in Byzantium. It sets down its interpretive viewpoint and conceptual model. This position is guaranteed by the consensus requirement that the state structure, governance, and legality be in accordance with the principles of reason, understood precisely as philosophical reason.[26] Its social dimensions are explicitly manifested in historiography, particularly in that written by philosophers. There are few texts influenced by Platonism recommending the "imperial science" as a direct part of philosophical knowledge, attributing metaphysical weight to it.[27] Instead, it is not difficult to establish that various non-philosophical texts dedicated to political problems, including panegyrics and *specula principium*, are based on a specifically formed metaphysics. This is reflected in the numerous demands for the philosophical education of the ruler or at least the presence of his philosophical mentor. The connection of political behavior and thought with philosophy is perhaps most vividly expressed by Theodore II Laskaris.

Being a philosopher himself, but also the son of an emperor and, later on, an emperor (1254–1258), Theodore is an author of political and rhetorical texts. In them, as well as in some chapters of his philosophical works, he theorizes about imperial government.[28] Philosophy is most directly dealt with in his *Satyra ad paedagogum*. Although it is called *κωμωδία*, *this work* extensively discusses the importance of philosophy in his education as an imperial son, preparing to assume governance of the state.

Theodore programmatically states that philosophy surpasses all things in life and that through wisdom man can acquire everything coming from God, whose name is Wisdom.[29] He enumerates the various benefits of philosoph-

26 Cf. T. Pavlov, S. Markov, Political Philosophy as an Interpretative View and Conceptual Model (Michael of Ephesus and Gemistus Plethon), in: *Archiv für mittelalterliche Philosophie und Kultur*, 12 (2006), 32.

27 Cf. D. Angelov, Classifications of Political Philosophy, in: *The Many Faces of Byzantine Philosophy*, eds. B. Bydén, K. Ierodiakonou, Athens 2012, 35–45.

28 Cf. ibid., 204–252.

29 *Theodorus II Ducas Lascaris, Satyra ad paedagogum, in: Id., Opuscula rhetorica, ed.* A. Tartaglia, München–Leipzig 2000, 168, 343–345.

ical knowledge for shaping the ruler and his practice. In paragraphs 14–18[30] Theodore demonstrates the crucial importance of philosophy for understanding the essence of practical deeds (πράξεις),[31] proving his theses through the six definitions of philosophy that became classical after being adopted by no less than John Damascene and Michael Psellus.

In paragraph 18, offering a sort of summary, Laskaris lists the highest benefits attained through each of the definitions. He notes that through the definition of philosophy as knowledge of being one reaches a life in the truth of being; through "knowledge of things divine and human" one achieves avoidance of shameful deeds; "remembering death" provides the ability to choose good and avoid evil; becoming godlike, as far as it is possible for man, brings knowledge of what is appropriate for the ruler (ἄρχων) and the governed, as well as knowledge of the first principle, and of each principle, starting from the principle that has no beginning and is eternal; through "love for wisdom" man, assisted by the heavenly eros, acquires love and dignified behavior.[32]

The relatively thorough discussion of philosophy as the "art of arts and science of sciences" is specifically relevant to our topic.[33] Here the first science (πρώτη ἐπιστήμη) is described as following divine providence, as well as nature, the latter being subordinate to divine commands. At this point, philosophy is identified with βασιλικὴ ἐπιστήμη, i.e. "royal science," of which every man in the world without exception should be acquainted. Hence Theodore derives the necessity to philosophize, and to do so in the best possible way. He is convinced that, for the ruler, it is necessary to study this ἐπιστήμη and not to do (πράττειν) anything without it.[34]

The integration of "royal science" with the first philosophy and the explicit declaration that philosophy is the basis of political praxis is immediately evident for Theodore, who is not only trained in philosophy, but is a prolific philosophical writer himself. For the majority of the compilers of rhetoric-pedagogical texts in the field of political ideology, as well as for the emperors and political figures, such competence was not necessarily available. But for them, too, the historically construed metaphysics of Byzantine philosophers functions as an active background for both their thinking and their praxis.[35]

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30 Ibid., 172, 446–181, 657.

31 Ibid., 179, 608–609.

32 Ibid., 179, 610–181, 657.

33 Cf. D. Angelov, Classifications of Political Philosophy, in: *The Many Faces of Byzantine Philosophy*, eds. B. Bydén, K. Ierodiakonou, Athens 2012, 40–42.

34 *Theodorus II Ducas Lascaris, Satyra ad paedagogum, in: Id., Opuscula rhetorica, ed.* A. Tartaglia, München–Leipzig 2000, *180, 632—181, 1.*

35 Cf. G. Kapriev, The Political and the Byzantine Philosophy, in: *Le théologico-politique au Moyen Âge*, éd. D. Poirel, Paris 2020, 29–34.

2 Historicity as a Foundational Element of Byzantine Philosophy

One of the revolutionary elements introduced by the Christian way of thinking into philosophical thought was the incorporation of the historical into the core of the metaphysical. The "intertwining of metaphysics, epistemology, and history" is paradigmatically settled in the West by Augustine.[36] While the occidental early Middle Ages rather used to philosophize within historical thinking, by the latest in the 12th century, there emerged a trend towards ahistorical abstraction, exemplified, for instance, in the dispute between the "universal dialecticians" and the "historical metaphysicians."[37] In so-called modern philosophy, history falls into the realm of appearances, separating the noumenal from the phenomenal; history is hereby once again understood as nothing more than a sequence of phenomena.[38] Only the productive metaphysical thinking of recent decades demonstrates a readiness to assert, alongside the epistemic element, both an anthropological and a historical structural element of metaphysics as binding.[39] Byzantine philosophy, however, establishes the "history-metaphysics" connection as its pivot from the very beginning.

2.1 *The Historical-Metaphysical Program*

Maximus the Confessor epitomizes the foundational elements of historical metaphysics. True to the tradition of the Church Fathers, he sets the order of creation and the order of divinization as the beginning and goal of the one

36 A. Mensching-Estakhr, Zur metaphysischen Aporie des geschichtsphilosophischen Denkens—Das Gebrochene und Ungebrochene der Metaphysik, in: *Wahrheit und Geschichte. Die gebrochene Tradition metaphysischen Denkens*, Festschrift für G. Mensching, eds. A. Mensching-Estakhr, M. Städtler, Würzburg 2012, 49.

37 Cf. e.g. G. Kapriev, Der Mensch als kosmisches Atom in der mittelalterlichen Historiographie (9.–11. Jahrhundert), in: *Mensch und Natur im Mittelalter* (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 21/1), ed. A. Zimmermann, Berlin–New York 1991, 28–40; G. Kapriev, Das Naturalisieren der Geschichtsschreibung nach dem 12. Jahrhundert (der Bedeutungswandel von *persona, locus* und *tempus*), in: *Scinéntia und ars im Hoch- und Spätmittelalter* (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 22), eds. I. Craemer-Ruegenberg, A. Speer, Berlin–New York, 1994, 846–859; G. Kapriev, *Lateinische Rivalen in Konstantinopel: Anselm von Havelberg und Hugo Eterianus*, Leuven 2018, 87–95.

38 A. Mensching-Estakhr, Zur metaphysischen Aporie des geschichtsphilosophischen Denkens—Das Gebrochene und Ungebrochene der Metaphysik, in: *Wahrheit und Geschichte. Die gebrochene Tradition metaphysischen Denkens*, Festschrift für G. Mensching, eds. A. Mensching-Estakhr, M. Städtler, Würzburg 2012, 54 and 61.

39 Cf. A. Speer, *Fragile Konvergenz. 3 Essays zu Fragen metaphysischen Denkens*, Köln 2010, 13–24. Cf. G. Mensching, Geschichte der Philosophie als Philosophie der Geschichte, in: *Die Geschichtlichkeit des philosophischen Denkens*, eds. G. Kapriev, G. Mensching, Sofia 2004, 15–20.

divine plan that unfolds in history.[40] Both, the beginning and the goal of history, delineate the boundaries within which the proper subject matter of philosophy is present. Man's state at the moment of creation is not perfect. His perfection is set as a task.[41] Initially, man is positioned within being in such a way as to harmonize created and uncreated natures and become divine by grace. Instead, through sin, he introduces into human existence another, lower mode of existence.[42] Nonetheless, the deification of man remains the ultimate goal of the economy. Therefore, it is necessarily related to history, which is motivated by its goal, the eschaton, and determined by the act of God's incarnation and its immediate result, that is, the possibility and actuality of salvation. The history of the world and the history of salvation have a common center. It is the earthly life of Christ, through which the Son-Logos is present in all history and shapes it. The Incarnation not only gives meaning to the whole of history—both prospectively and retrospectively—but also introduces a change in the order and structure of the historical universe.

Maximus by no means interprets history as some autonomous and therefore defective movement of post-lapsarian contingent being in time, opposed to the eternity of Divinity and the immutability of the principles of being. History is not the space-time of corruption and damage to be overcome and rejected. On the contrary, Maximus unequivocally connects the finite with the infinite, the transitory with the eternal, the mutable with the constant precisely in the realm of history, which has its beginning and goal, its meaning and the paradigm of its dynamics from the Principle of all principles.[43]

History is not "completely different" to the principles of being, which are supposed to be regarded as abstract-metaphysical foundations that dwell beyond all movement, time, and matter. In Maximus's perspective, history should be viewed as "metaphysics" because the same principles operate and are within it, insofar as the Logos himself is and operates in them. History and metaphysics are not in correspondence or compatibility. They are one and the same. History is an epiphany of the metaphysical. With Maximus the Confessor, as with all of Byzantine philosophy, one should speak of a unified historical-metaphysical program.

40 Cf. Maximus Confessor, Expositio orationis dominicae, in: PG 90, 873D.

41 Maximus Confessor, Quaestiones ad Thalassium, prol, in: PG 90, 257C–260A.

42 Maximus Confessor, Ambigua ad Ioannem, 41, in: PG 91, 1308BC.

43 Cf. D. Skliris, Syn-odical Ontology: Maximus the Confessor's Proposition for Ontology, within History and in the Eschaton, in: *Christian and Islamic Philosophies of Time*, eds. S. Mitralexis, M. Podbielski, Wilmington 2018, 85–117.

2.2 *The Cores of Historical Metaphysics*

Whereas in Augustine the principle of time is taken quite seriously and the theme of *De civitate Dei* is the world as history, an authoritative thesis asserts, the theme of the *Corpus Areopagiticum* is the world as a hierarchy, dwelling immutably in an extra-temporal eternity.[44] In this way, the ancient prejudice is exemplified, according to which Byzantine culture ascribes a radical epistemological priority to timeless and immobile transcendence, setting as a norm the pursuit of immobility, immutability, and overcoming temporality as the state of perfection of cosmic being and the ethical ideal of human existence. One of the conclusions drawn from this is the contention there was a lack of philosophy as such in Byzantium and especially a lack of the science of being as being, i.e., of what the medieval Occident named "metaphysics."

2.2.1 Time and Historicity in the Doctrine of the Hierarchy of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite

The Dionysian hierarchy can be determined as "immutable" only in its principle structure. The idea of a universal cosmic order set by God himself is a fundamental position of medieval Christian culture in general. According to Dionysius, however, the hierarchy and especially the "church hierarchy" does not dwell in any "extra-temporal eternity." Its immanent determination arises from its internal dynamics.

The God abiding in eternity, the sole and actual first principle of the hierarchy, is not a member of the hierarchy, but dwells outside it. It is a hierarchy of creation. It is true that every created nature preserves and confirms its status of being and holy wholeness in the hierarchy,[45] in that the beings are distinguished among them and are present according to their unique forms.[46] But they do not coincide with the divine essence at all and they are not essential emanations of God. Creation does not form any essential community with its Creator. The hierarchy is simultaneously an order of salvation, knowledge and efficacy.[47] Furthermore, it is set as a task and sacred duty before created beings, because the hierarchy as a goal is nothing other than unification with God. The unifying and uniting power of the hierarchy is love (ἔρως as well as

44 С. Аверинцев, *Поэтика ранневизантийской литературы*, *Москва* 1977, 100–101.

45 De ecclesiastica hierarchia (EH), IV, 3, in: *Corpus Dionysiacum II*, eds. G. Heil, A.M. Ritter, Berlin–New York 1991 (ed. Heil/Ritter), 97, 19–28 (PG 3, 476CD).

46 Cf. De divinis nominibus (DN), VIII, 9, in: *Corpus Dionysiacum I*, ed. B.R. Suchla, Berlin–New York 1990 (ed. Suchla), 207, 1–5 (PG 3, 897C).

47 De coelesti hierarchia (CH), III, 2, in: *Corpus Dionysiacum II*, eds. G. Heil, A.M. Ritter, Berlin–New York 1991 (ed. Heil/Ritter), 18, 1–11 (PG 3, 165AB).

ἀγάπη), which is to be interpreted only as the dynamic directing of created beings toward each other and toward God.[48] Dionysius emphasizes that God is the origin from which every eternity and being, every time, every becoming, and every effect originate.[49] He is the life par excellence and the life of every life,[50] whereby life is invariably interpreted as movement.

The relationship between activity and passivity is crucial for the Dionysian conception of hierarchy. Each level of the hierarchy is passive (with respect to the action of the higher level) and active (with respect to the lower level). Each member of the hierarchy is active rather than passive, because it is obliged to demonstrate constant vigilance and energetic effort in order to be actively participating in the gifts of Divinity.[51] Every singular component of the hierarchy dwells in a threefold movement. It is oriented towards the higher one, so that it directs its forces towards it; it moves itself within its own level; and it dynamically turns towards the lower hierarchical levels.[52] Each member of the hierarchy stands in an active relation: it is unconditionally acting, thereby confirming its real participation in the first Principle of all orders. Movement is taken "quite seriously" by Dionysius. It is a constitutive characteristic of the hierarchy.

Time, for its part, can in no way be regarded as a deviation from the nature of hierarchy, i.e., as some kind of quasi-existence. On the contrary, it is an entirely real characteristic of certain hierarchical orders (the orders of corporeal creatures), which corresponds to the type of their being-presence. God Himself is the originator of time and the essence of the times; He is the principle of all times and of every becoming.[53] The overcoming of time is a process coinciding with the general process of divinization. Its contradictoriness and dramatism are elements of the drama and tension inherent in the common pursuit of divine existence.

Movement and time are primarily linked not to hierarchical levels, but to individual members of those levels. Movement towards God and the attainment of divinization are realized hypostatically. Because the power of the higher orders, which in their own way participate in the divine powers, attracts

48 Cf. DN, IV, 10; IV, 13–15, in: ed. Suchla, 154, 7–155, 20; 158, 19–161, 5 (PG 3, 705B–708B; 712A–713B).

49 DN, V, 4, in: ed. Suchla, 183, 2–4 (PG 3, 817CD).

50 Cf. DN, VI, 1–3, in: ed. Suchla, 190, 3–193, 4 (PG 3, 856A–857B).

51 Cf. CH XV, 1; EH III, 3, 7; EH II, 3, 5, in: ed. Heil/Ritter, 50, 13–51, 21; 86, 1–16; 76, 8–77, 8 (PG 3, 328AC; 433BD; 401AC).

52 Cf. CH XV, 1, in: ed. Heil/Ritter, 51, 11–21; DN IV, 8, in: ed. Suchla, 153, 4–9 (PG 3, 328BC; 704D–705A).

53 DN, V, 4, in: ed. Suchla, 183, 2–4 (PG 3, 817CD).

the lower orders to themselves and brings them closer to divine powers,[54] whereby the goal of the hierarchy is divinization, the impression arises that the actual goal of the hierarchy should be its abolition, achieving a total unification of all levels with God, some kind of equating or even identification with Him. But this is a misleading impression. Since each order holds being itself in a different level, these orders are onto-logically not equal: they do not have the same measure of being. Lower orders are incapable of uniting with higher ones. Such violation of the measure is to be regarded as an attack against God.[55] Only single members hypostatically supported and appointed by God, attain the power to change their level with a higher one.

In this context, Dionysius primarily considers humanity. Humanity is the centrifugal point of force for the entire hierarchy as well the unifying principle and truth of the hierarchical energies.[56] Humanity, seen as the horizon of the hierarchy, is capable of being the bearer of its sacred purpose and the leader towards it. However, this cannot happen through humanity itself, because it does not correspond to the measure of its natural determination. The great master who solves this task is Christ. He realizes the unifying community in which he unites the high and the low, the simple and the compound, the eternal and the temporal.[57] Simply through His descent into the center of the hierarchy, Christ sets it as a task and assigns to humanity the main role in the process of its resolution. Thereby He determines humanity to be the concentration of the hierarchical orders and establishes its responsibility for their optimal unfolding and sanctification.[58]

The emphasis falls not so much on being, but on existence, and specifically on the existence of the hypostasis. The universality of the hierarchy excludes the presence of zones of strangeness or radical otherness. Along with that, it presupposes the diversity as well as the value of the individual as a condition for its actual being. Relatively autonomous levels of being are clearly outlined, which determine the status of its members: each member dwells on its level and asserts its unique self-sufficiency there. The individual characteristics and the potential of individual existence, the existence of the individual and the person, become decisive for the requisite upward movement. The singular

54 Cf. DN IV, 2, in: ed. Suchla, 144, 18–146, 5 (PG 3, 696AD).

55 Cf. EH V, 1, 2, in: ed. Heil/Ritter, 104, 11–106, 3 (PG 3, 501A–504A).

56 Cf. EH VII, 3, 9, in: ed. Heil/Ritter, 129, 23–130, 5 (PG 3, 565BC).

57 Cf. EH III, 3, 12, in: ed. Heil/Ritter, 92, 14–93, 10; DN I, 4, in: ed. Suchla, 114, 7–115, 5 (PG 3, 444AB; 592BC).

58 Cf. E.S. Mainoldi, *Dietro "Dionigi l'Areopagita". la genesi e gli scopi del Corpus Dionysiacum*, Roma 2018, 373–380.

determinateness is defined by the existential energies that establish the value status of the hypostasis, from which its own hierarchical activity is required. Through this activity both the permanence of the entire hierarchy and the possibility for singular transitions between the pre-temporarily fixed hierarchical levels are maintained.[59]

Immanent dynamism is a principle of the Dionysian hierarchy of creation, which is conceived as a historical dynamic in respect of the corporeal creature. The whole economy, encompassing salvation history and world history, unfolds in time and is unthinkable without temporality. Movement in time and temporality itself possess constitutive significance.[60] The generic being-positions, established pre-temporally, presuppose the possibility for hypostases to change their ontological level. Existence proves decisive for the structure and unfolding of the created cosmos. First and foremost, this concerns individual, hypostatic existence, its dispositions and energies, which are inseparably connected with time and unfold within it. In this perspective, the individual realization of hierarchical movements is explained, as well as the decisive role of humanity, and the economic presence of Christ. It is in this context that the indwelling of the Divine within finite being is recognized as crucial to the course of human and cosmic history.[61]

2.2.2 The Doctrine of Creation

A first core of the historical-metaphysical dimensions forms the idea of creation. Even through the formulations of the Cappadocians, it was established that God creates the world out of nothing through His energies, creating everything at once in an act not bound by time. The togetherness of all creative *logoi* is contained in the divine Logos: they are known and determined by Him. From here Maximus the Confessor's unfolding of the paradigmatic doctrine of the *logoi* develops. The beginning of the contingent being takes place through the transition of non-existence into existence, through change and setting in motion.

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59 Cf. E.S. Mainoldi, *Dietro "Dionigi l'Areopagita". La genesi e gli scopi del Corpus Dionysiacum*, Roma 2018, 373–380.

60 Cf. A. Golitzin, *Mystagogy: A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita*, Collegeville, Minnesota 2013, 73–93.

61 Cf. Г. Каприев, Учението за йерархията на Псевдо-Дионисий Ареопагит и западноевропейската средновековна култура, във: *Философски преглед*, 4 (1991) [G. Kapriev, The Doctrine of Hierarchy of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Western Medieval Culture, in: *Philosophical Review*, 4 (1991)—Bulgarian], 31–50; G. Kapriev, Zeitlichkeit und Geschichtlichkeit als Grundelemente der byzantinischen Philosophie, in: *Die Geschichtlichkeit des philosophischen Denkens*, eds. G. Kapriev, G. Mensching, Sofia 2004, 58–71.

The *logoi* are eternally founded in God, but things begin to exist only after the decision of divine wisdom and will at the appropriate moment (ἐπιτὴδειος καιρός).[62] By virtue of creation they acquire their actual creaturely existence with its relative independence. Their development and decay are also connected with it. Existent beings, with their essences, properties, relations, etc., are created with time. They exist thanks to the eternal *logoi* but also due to the energy of their own essence.[63] Single created beings are completely included in the network constructed by the *logoi*. In their existence, however, they deviate more or less from their principled nature. Their existence is primarily connected to movement in time and history. The nature of everything created, i.e. of everything that is not God, exists in actuality only in history and becomes knowable amid historical existence.

With the act of creation the beginning of a time is laid, whose character corresponds to changing things. The beginning of time itself is nevertheless no time; it has no parts, dimensions, or extensions. God creates the visible world at once, but the world is not realized at once in its fullness and order.[64] The timeless beginning of all time is the first element of the "metaphysical" in historical time.

The movement of the historical is also constituted transcendentally and normalized metaphysically. It is in this context that Maximus the Confessor develops his critique against the Origenist triad of "rest-motion-creation," emphasizing that only divine nature dwells in eternal rest. Movement is necessarily counted according to its being among contingent things: created nature has never been immovable; movement is laid down in the natural *logos* of every contingent being.[65]

2.2.3 The Christological Pivot

The decisive axis of the historical metaphysical *par excellence* is the Christological pivot of history. The doctrine of creation acquires a fundamental historical sense only in the perspective of the historical presence of the incarnate Logos. The God-man is unique, and His historical uniqueness illuminates the whole of human nature. In Jesus Christ, God enters into the dynamics of his-

62 Maximus Confessor, Ambigua ad Ioannem, 7, in: PG 91, 1081A.

63 Ibid., in: PG 91, 1081AB.

64 Basilius Magnus, Homiliae in Hexaemeron, I, 5–6, in: PG 29, 13A–17A.

65 Cf. Maximus Confessor, Ambigua ad Thomam, 4, in: PG 91, 1041B; Id., Ambigua ad Ioannem, 7, in: PG 91, 1072BC. Cf. N. Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology. Maximus the Confessor's Eschatological Ontology of Being as Dialogical Reciprocity*, Brookline, Mass. 2010, 165–168.

tory by His nature, hypostasis, and energy.[66] The transcendent-metaphysical does not enter history by virtue of ahistorically subsisting ideas, but through the historically given existence of the Savior. It must be emphasized that the presence of Christ is simultaneously conceived in its historical and metahistorical dimensions. The earthly life of Jesus has its concrete historical period. Nevertheless, the Logos, becoming human, determines through his personal presence the entire history of humanity. One does not contradict the other and in no way excludes it. The synchronous historical and metahistorical presence of Christ in the world is also at the bottom of Christocentric sacramentalism and its interpretation in the paradigm of Byzantine philosophy through the hypostatically expressed natural energies.[67] Only in this perspective does the detailed presentation of the cooperation between the free activity of God and the free activity of humans become possible, which is the ferment of the historical.

From this point of view, another important dimension of the connection "history-metaphysics" becomes visible. "The Son," Maximus the Confessor insists, "remains in theological unity with the Father."[68] Theology and economy are inseparable linked in the hypostasis of Christ. This does not mean that the divine essence and intra-Trinitarian life become accessible to human reason through Christ. But it is said that the principle operating in the composite hypostasis of Christ makes rational cognition of the expressions of the divine essence possible thanks to the energetic *perichoresis* and the exchange of properties of both natures. The adequate cognition of God is involved in history and is conceivable only as being historical. Hence, the Cappadocian thesis becomes convincing, that the process of ἐπίγνωσις, i.e., of supra-knowledge leading man to unification with God, will continue indefinitely even in the Kingdom of God. The historical metaphysics of history breaks the limits of world history and goes beyond them.

God, with His eternity, is also not alien to history; He is actually present in it. The interaction of eternity, aeon and time is immediately obvious and effective for believers in the Eucharist.[69] The liturgy is ὁ καιρὸς τοῦ ποιῆσαι

66 Cf. G.D. Dragas, *The Faith of the Fathers. Essays in Patristic and Orthodox Doctrines*, Rollinsford 2005, 5–12.

67 Cf. G. Kapriev, Die Eucharistie Diskussion im lateinischen Mittelalter und ihre Inkommensurabilität mit der östlichen Tradition, in: *The Eucharist in Theology and Philosophy*, eds. I. Perczel, R. Forrai, G. Gereby, Leuven 2005, 213–222.

68 Maximus Confessor, Disputatio cum Pyrrho, in: PG 91, 348C–349B.

69 Cf. N. Loudovikos, *A Eucharistic Ontology: Maximus the Confessor's Ontology of Being as Dialogical Reciprocity*, Brookline 2010, *passim*.

τῷ Κυρίῳ—the *kairos* of God's action. The course of times is transformed by divine eternity.[70] Its historical action is to be identified with the permanent activity of the *logoi*, as well as with the bodily presence of the divine Logos in the world. It is precisely the bodily existence of Christ that gathers in the temporality of the world as a dynamic point in its ultimate state of being.[71]

2.2.4 Eschatology

This position becomes understandable within the horizon of the eschatological character of history, which should also be defined as a core point of historical metaphysics. According to Maximus the Confessor, divinization is the highest goal of creation and divine economy, a position that has validity as a model. The Logos desires the salvation of all and therefore deifies the human nature within Him. He unites Himself with all, both the worthy and the unworthy. God permeates all with His energies. Hence, the salvation of the human species takes place.[72]

Personal deification is the next step. It is realized in the free movement towards the good-being and the gracious reception of eternal-good-being. The universal character of salvation does not exclude the distinction between being eternally good and being eternally evil. The whole dialectic of "being—good/ evil -being—eternally-good/ evil -being" proceeds historically and is based on the interaction between divine grace and human nature and hypostasis.[73] The general basis of this dynamics too is the doctrine of the relationship between the principle of essence and the mode of existence of the same essence, which illustrates the tension between the immutable constitution and the variation, modification, and innovation based on it.[74] Thus, once again, the fundamental character of the connection "history-metaphysics" is affirmed.

The interconnection and interaction of time, eternity, and aeon are entirely present in the act of human divinization (θέωσις) in the history of this world,

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70 В. Цветковић, *Бог и време. Ученье о времену Светог Григорија Ниског*, Ниш 2013 [V. Cvetković, *God and Time: The Teaching on Time of St. Gregory of Nyssa*, Niš 2013—Serbian], 155–156.

71 S. Markov, *Die metaphysische Synthese des Johannes von Damaskus: Historische Zusammenhänge und Strukturtransformationen*, Leiden–Boston 2015, 129.

72 Cf. Maximus Confessor, Quaestiones ad Thalassium, 59, in: PG 90, 609BC; Id., Mystagogia, 7, in: PG 91, 685C.

73 Cf. Maximus Confessor, Ambigua ad Ioannem, 7, in: PG 91, 1048B; 1073AC; 1076A; 1077AB; 1084B; Ambigua ad Ioannem, 42, in: PG 91, 1325B; 1329AB.

74 Cf. Ambigua ad Ioannem, 42, in: PG 91, 1329A; 1341D; 1344D.

as conceived by the Eastern Christian tradition. The existence of the saints and their experiential knowledge of the Divine should be defined as a "borderline experience" of the world and its boundary, and interpreted as the point of reaching the Divine itself.

Perfect deification of the worthy is attainable only at the goal, in the Kingdom of God, which is the space of rest (στάσις). This rest is not only stability but also a "movement" transcending any movement. Rest and movement themselves are overcome in God.[75] Maximus the Confessor speaks of rest in permanent movement and of an identical movement in rest,[76] a δρόμος ἀεικίνητος, an eternally moving course.[77] This process does not occur in time—movement and time are not necessarily linked. The movements of the deified in the Kingdom of God, connected with the eternal life of God, are independent of time.[78] Man is deified eternally; his deification knows no limit.[79]

Maximus's paradigmatic historical-metaphysical way of thinking culminates in the theory of the five actual divisions of the hypostasis of nature and their overcoming. The first is the division between uncreated and created nature, which is a consequence of the creative act of God Himself. The second is that by which God divides created nature into noetic and material. The third is the division of material nature into heaven and earth. The fourth division follows from the separation of the Earth into paradise and inhabited land. Finally, the fifth comes from the division by which the human being, that was supposed to be the all-unifying workshop, is divided into male and female. The human being is the last creation because it is the center of created being and the natural connection between all creatures. Therefore, the human being, newly created in Christ, is called to overcome the five divisions and to achieve the unification of all reality. It is able to accomplish this task only because it participates in Christ, who Himself has realized this overcoming and has provided the paradigm. Thus, the fullness of God's plan for the history of humanity and the history of the world is brought to completion.[80] The metaphysical is verified through the completion of history.

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75 H.U. v. Balthasar, *Kosmische Liturgie. Das Weltbild Maximus des Bekenners*, Einsiedeln ^{2}1961, 137.

76 Maximus Confessor, Quaestiones ad Thalassium, 65, in: PG 90, 760A.

77 Ibid., 17, in: PG 90, 304CD.

78 Maximus Confessor, Ambigua ad Ioannem, 10, in: PG 94, 1164B.

79 Maximus Confessor, Quaestiones ad Thalassium, 22, in: PG 90, 320D. Cf. J.-C. Larchet, *La divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Paris 1996, 545–674.

80 Maximus Confessor, Ambigua ad Ioannem, 41, in: PG 91, 1304D–1309D; Id., Quaestiones ad Thalassium, 48, in: PG 90, 436AB.

The relationship "history-metaphysics" is not a secondary concept in Byzantine philosophy. It is, in fact, its very core. If one wanted to think about the metaphysics of this philosophical program in an appropriate way, one should understand it as a historical metaphysics.

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The book is the result of thirty years of Georgi Kapriev's work in the field of Byzantine philosophy. Contrary to long-held opinions that no authentic philosophy existed in Byzantium, the fullness and complexity of this philosophical tradition are offered. The subject is its context and its main themes, presented in their systematic framework. The areas in which this tradition differs from the Latin tradition and which constitute its contribution are highlighted. Among these are the focus on being as a dynamic network, on teachings on natural and creative activities, on divine logoi and the self-existence of things, and on freedom.

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